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LADY GRACE.

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CHAPTER I.

GREAT AND LITTLE WHITTON.

A RUSTIC congregation was pouring out of a rustic church, one Sunday afternoon; St. Mary's, in the hamlet of Little Whitton, situated about thirty miles from the Metropolis. Great Whitton, some three miles off, was altogether a different affair, for the parish, there, was more aristocratic than rustic, and the living was worth nine hundred a-year: Little Whitton brought its incumbent in only two hundred, all told. The livings were both in the gift of the Earl of Avon, whose seat was near, on the other side Great Whitton. The Incumbent of Great Whitton was an old man, almost past duty; the Incumbent of Little Whitton was an able and attractive man scarcely thirty, the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. Therefore, little wonder need be expressed if some of the Great Whitton families ignored their old rector, who had lost his teeth, and could not by any effort be heard, and came to listen to the eloquent Mr. Baumgarten.

A small, open carriage, the horses driven by a boy, jockey fashion, waited at the church door. The boy was in a crimson jacket and a velvet cap, the postilion livery of the Avon family. The sweeping seat behind was low and convenient, without doors; therefore, when two ladies emerged from the church, they stepped into it unassisted. The one looked about fifty years of age, and walked slowly; the other was a young lady of exceeding fairness, with somewhat haughty features, and haughty eyes, blue as the summer sky. The boy touched his horses, and drove on.

"He surpassed himself to-day, Grace," began the elder lady.

"I think he did, mamma."

"But it is a long way to come—for me. I can't venture out in all weathers. If we had him at Great Whitton, now, I could hear him every Sunday."

"Well, mamma, nothing is more easy than to have him—as I

have said more than once," observed the younger, bending down to adjust something in the carriage, that her sudden heightening of colour might pass unnoticed. "It is impossible that Mr. Chester should last long, and you could get Henry to give him the living."

"Grace, you talk like a child. Valuable livings are not given away so easily: neither are men without connections inducted to them. I never heard that young Baumgarten had any connections; not as much as a father or mother, even: he does not speak of his family. No; the most sensible plan would be for Mr. Chester to turn off that muff of a curate, and take on Baumgarten in his stead."

The young lady threw back her head. "Rectors don't give up their preferences to subside into curates, mamma."

"Unless it is made well worth their while," returned the elder, in a matter-of-fact tone; "and old Chester might make it worth Mr. Baumgarten's."

"Mr. Chester ought to retire. For my part, I cannot imagine how these old clergy can persist in remaining in their livings."

"The clergy must grow old as well as other people, my dear."

"I am not speaking of age so much as of failing faculties. Some men older than Mr. Chester are as capable of fulfilling their duties as ever they were. But Mr. Chester is not."

The young lady received no answer to this, and they went along in silence.

"Mamma!" she exclaimed, when they were about a mile on the road, "we never called to inquire after Mrs. Dane!"

"I did not think of doing so."

"I did. I shall go back again. James!"

The boy, without slackening his speed, half turned on his horse. "My lady?"

"When you come to the corner, drive down the lane and go back to the cottage."

He touched his cap and looked forward again, and Lady Grace sank back in the carriage.

"You might have consulted me first, Grace," grumbled the Countess of Avon. "And why do you choose the longer way, round by the lane?"

"The lane is shady, mamma, and the afternoon sunny: to prolong our drive will do you good."

Lady Grace laughed as she spoke, and it would have taken one deeper in penetration than the Lady Avon had ever been to divine that all had been done with a preconcerted plan: that when her daughter drove from the church door, she had fully intended to proceed part of the way home, and then go back again. Lady Grace Carmel had rather a strong will, which had been fostered by indulgence, for she was an only daughter.

We must notice another of the congregation, one who had left the church by a different door. It was a young lady of two or three and

twenty; she had less beauty than Lady Grace, but a far sweeter countenance. She crossed the churchyard, and opening one of its gates, found herself in a narrow sheltered walk, running through a corner of Whitton Wood. It was the nearest way to her home, Whitton Cottage.

A few paces within it, she stood against a tree, turned and waited: her lips parted, her cheek flushed, and her hand was laid upon her beating heart. Was she expecting anyone to join her? Little doubt of it; and that it was one, all too dear to her, the signs betrayed. The ear of love is strangely fine, and she, Edith Dane, bent her ears to listen: with the first sound of approaching footsteps, she walked hurriedly on. Would she be caught waiting for him? No, no; rather would she hide herself for ever, than betray aught of the deep love that lay in her heart for the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

It was Mr. Baumgarten who was following her: he sometimes chose the near way home, too: a tall, graceful man, with pale, classic features, and luminous brown eyes set deeply: but in his face might be seen somewhat of irresolution. He strode on, and overtook Miss Dane.

"How fast you are walking, Edith!"

She turned her head with the prettiest air of surprise possible, her cheeks bright with love's rosy flush. "Oh—is it you, Mr. Baumgarten? I was walking fast to get home to poor mamma."

Nevertheless, it did happen that their pace slackened considerably: in fact, they scarcely advanced at all, but sauntered along side by side, as if to enjoy the beauty of the summer afternoon. "They have been taking me to task to-day," suddenly began Mr. Baumgarten.

"Who? The Avons, do you mean? I saw they were at church."

"Not the Avons. What have they to do with me, Edith?" And Edith blushed at his question; or rather at herself for having mentioned them. "Squire Wells and his wife, with half-a-dozen more, carpeted me in the vestry after service this morning."

"What about?"

"About the duties of the parish; secular, not clerical: I take care that the latter shall be efficiently performed. The old women are not coddled, the younger ones' households not sufficiently looked up, and the school, in the point of plain sewing, is running to rack and ruin."

Mr. Baumgarten had been speaking in a half-joking way, his beautiful eyes alive with merriment. Miss Dane received the news more seriously. "You did not say anything of this at dinner-time; you did not tell mamma."

"No. Why should I tell her? It might only worry her, you know. The school sewing is the worst grievance," he lightly ran on.

"Dame Giles's Betsy took some cloth with her, which ought to have gone back a shirt, but which was returned a pair of pillow-cases: the dame boxed Betsy's ears, went to the school and nearly boxed Miss Turner's. It seems to me they could not have a better governess

than she is. However, such mistakes, I am told, are often occurring and the matrons of the parish are up in arms."

"But do they expect you to look after the sewing of the school?" breathlessly asked Edith.

"Not exactly; but they think I might provide a remedy: someone who would do so."

"How stupid they are! I'm sure Miss Turner does what she can with such a tribe. Not that I think she is particularly clever; and were there any lady who would supervise occasionally, it might be better; mamma can't, but ——"

"That is just it," interrupted Mr. Baumgarten, laughing. "They tell me I ought to help Miss Turner to a supervisor, by taking to myself a wife."

He looked at Edith as he spoke, and her face happened to be turned full upon him. The words dyed it with a glowing crimson, even to the roots of her soft brown hair. In her confusion she knew not whether to keep it where it was, or to turn it away: her eyelids had dropped, glowing also; and Edith Dane could have boxed her own ears as heartily as Dame Giles had boxed the unhappy Miss Betsy's.

"It cannot be thought of, you know, Edith."

"What cannot?"

"My marrying. Marry on two hundred a year, and expose my wife, and perhaps others, to poverty and privation? No, that I will never do."

"The Parsonage must be put in repair if you marry," stammered Edith, not in the least knowing what she said, but compelling herself to say something so that she might appear unconcerned.

"And a great deal of money it would take to do it. I told Squire Wells if he could get my tithes increased to double their present value, then I might venture upon a wife. He laughed and replied I might look out for a wife who had ten thousand pounds."

"Such wives are not easily found," murmured Edith Dane.

"Not by me," returned Mr. Baumgarten. "A college chum of mine, never dreaming to aspire to anything better than I possess now, married a rich young widow in the second year of his curacy, and lives on the fat of the land, in pomp and luxury. I would not have done it."

"Why?"

"Because no love went with it; even before his marriage he allowed himself to say as much to me; disparaged her in fact. No; the school and the other difficulties, which are out of my line, must do as they can, yet awhile."

"Of course, mamma would be the proper person to continue to look after these things for you as she used to do, if she were not incapacitated."

"But she is, Edith. And your time is taken up with her, so that you cannot help me."

Miss Dane was silent. Had her time not been taken up, she fancied it might not be deemed quite the thing, in her censorious neighbourhood, to be going about in conjunction with Mr. Baumgarten; although she was the late Rector's daughter.

The Reverend Cyrus Dane had been many years Rector of Little Whitton; at his death, Mr. Baumgarten was appointed. Mrs. Dane was left with a very slender provision, derived from an annuity. Her husband had been quite unable to save money, the needs of his parish, the education of his two daughters, and the expenses of living had utterly absorbed his stipend, and kept him sadly poor. So poor that the necessary repairs of the rectory from year to year had never been attended to, and when he died it was in a woeful state of dilapidation. The eldest of his daughters, Charlotte, had married George Brice, a nephew of Brice the surgeon; he was the junior partner in a shipping house and lived in London.

When Mr. Baumgarten arrived to take possession of his new living, he found the Rectory perfectly uninhabitable. Mrs. Dane had moved out of it to Whitton Cottage, and it was arranged that he should take up his residence with her, paying a certain sum for his board. It was a comfortable arrangement for the young clergyman, and it was a help to Mrs. Dane. He had not the means to put the Rectory into repair, and was told that he must go upon the late Rector's widow to do it; that she was liable, as in fact she was. But Mr. Baumgarten could not and would not do that. She had not the means to restore it any more than he had. So things were left as they were, to drift, and he made himself happy and contented at Whitton Cottage. He had just entered now upon the second year of his residence with them; during which Mrs. Dane had been seized with a slow and lingering illness, which must in time terminate fatally.

"Why did she love him? Curious fool, be still;
Is human love the growth of human will?"

A great deal happier for many of us if it were the growth of human will, or under its control. In too many instances it is born of association, of companionship; and thus had it been at Whitton Cottage. Thrown together in daily intercourse, an attachment had sprung up between the young Rector and Edith Dane; a concealed attachment; for he considered his circumstances barred his marriage, and she hid her feelings as a matter of course. He was an ambitious man, a proud man, though perhaps not quite conscious of it, and to encounter the expenses of a family household upon small means appeared to him more to be shunned than any adverse fate on earth. Mr. Baumgarten was of gentle birth, but he had not any private fortune or near relatives; he had in fact no connections whatever to push him forward

in the Church. For all he could see now, he might live and die at this poor living, and he did not like the prospect.

But we left him walking home from service with Edith, and they soon reached Whitton Cottage. Mr. Baumgarten went on at once to the little room he used as his study, but Edith, at the sound of wheels, lingered in the garden. The Countess of Avon's carriage drew up, and stopped at the gate. Miss Dane went out to it. Grace spoke first, her eyes running in all directions while she did so, as if they were in search of some object not in view.

"Edith, we could not go home without driving round to ask after your mamma."

"Thank you, Lady Grace. Mamma is in little pain to-day and her cough is not troublesome. I think her breathing is generally better in hot weather. Will you not come in?"

"Couldn't think of it, my dear," spoke up the Countess. "Our dinner will be ready; you know I have to take it early. Grace forgot to order James round till we were half-way home."

"Has Mr. Baumgarten got back from church yet?" carelessly spoke Lady Grace, adjusting the lace of her summer mantle.

"He is in his study, I fancy," replied Edith, and she turned round to hide the blush called up by the question, just as Mr. Baumgarten approached them. At his appearance the blush in Grace Carmel's face rivalled that in Edith's.

"You surpassed yourself to-day," cried Lady Avon, as she shook hands with him. "I must hear that sermon again. Would you mind lending it to me?"

"Not at all," he replied, "if you can only make out my hieroglyphics. My writing is plain to me, but I do not know that it would be so to you, Lady Avon."

"When shall I have it? Will you bring it up this evening, and take tea with us? But you will find the walk long, perhaps, after your services to-day; and the weather is hot," she added.

"Very long; too far. Could you not return with us now, Mr. Baumgarten?" interposed her daughter. "Mamma will be glad of you to say grace at table."

Whether it pleased the Countess or not, she had no resource, in good manners, but to second the invitation so unceremoniously given. Mr. Baumgarten may have thought he had no resource but to acquiesce—out of good manners also, perhaps. He stood leaning over the carriage, and spoke, half laughing:

"Am I to bring my sermon with me? If so, I must go in for it. I have just taken it from my pocket."

He came back with his sermon in its black cover. The seat of the carriage was exceedingly large, sweeping round in a half circle. Lady Grace drew nearer to her mother, sitting quite back in the middle of the seat, and Mr. Baumgarten took his seat beside her. Edith Dane cast a look after them as the carriage rolled away, a

pained, envious look ; for her, the sunshine of the afternoon had gone out.

Miss Dane did not like these visits of his to Avon House, and he seemed to be often going there on one plea or another. There, he was surrounded by all the glory and pomp of stately life, and that is apt to tell upon a man's heart ; Grace Carmel, too, was more beautiful than she, and singularly attractive. Not that Edith did, or could, suppose there was any real danger : the difference in their social positions barred that.

Some cloud, unexplained, and nearly forgotten now, had overshadowed Lady Avon's later life. It had occurred, whatever it was, during the lifetime of her lord. She had chosen ever since to live at Avon House in retirement.

An inward complaint, real or fancied, had set in, and the Countess thought herself unable to move to London. Lady Grace had been presented by her aunt, and passed one season in town : then she had returned to her mother, to share perforce in her retirement, at which she inwardly rebelled. Over and over again did Grace wish her brother would marry and come home ; for the place was his, and it would oblige her mother to quit it. But Lord Avon preferred his town house to his country one, and told his mother she was heartily welcome to stay in it. He liked a gay life better than a dull one : as all the world had known when he was young Viscount Standish.

It is just possible that the ennui of Grace's monotonous life at Avon had led to her falling in love with Mr. Baumgarten. That she had done so, that she loved him, with a strong and irrepressible passion, was certain : and she did not try to overcome it, but rather fostered it, seeking his society, dwelling upon his image. Had it occurred to her to fear that she might find a dangerous rival in Edith Dane ? No ; for she cherished the notion that Mr. Baumgarten was attached to herself, and Edith was supposed to be engaged to a distant cousin ; a young man who had been reading with her father during the last year of his life. The young fellow *had* wanted Edith ; he asked her parents for her, he implored her to wait until he should be ordained. Edith had only laughed at him ; but the report, that they were engaged, had in some way got about ; and Lady Grace never thought to doubt it. No ; strange though it may seem, to those who understand the exacting and jealous nature of love, Lady Grace never had cast a fear to Edith's being her rival.

This evening was but another of those Mr. Baumgarten sometimes spent at Avon House, feeding the flame of her ill-starred passion. His manner to women was naturally tender, and to Grace, with her fascinations brought unconsciously to bear upon him, dangerously warm. That he never for one moment had outstepped the bounds of friendly intercourse, Grace attributed entirely to the self-restraint imposed by his inferior position ; but she did not doubt he loved her in secret.

While at dinner he told them, jokingly as he had told Edith, that the parish wanted him to marry. Lady Avon remarked, in answer, that he could not do better; parsons and doctors should always be married men.

"Yes, that's very right, very true," he returned, in the same jesting tone. "But suppose they have nothing to marry upon?"

"But you have something, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Yes, I have two hundred a year; and no residence."

"The Rectory is rather bad, I believe."

"Bad! Well, Lady Avon, you should see it."

"Mr. Dane ought not to have allowed it to get into that state," she remarked; and the subject dropped.

After dinner Mr. Baumgarten stood on the lawn with Grace, watching the glories of the setting sun. Lady Avon, indoors, was beginning to doze; they knew better than to disturb her; this after-dinner sleep, which sometimes did not last more than ten minutes, was of great moment to her, the doctor said. And indeed it was so: when she did not get it, she invariably had a restless night, the over-tired brain not suffering her to sleep. She took it in the dining-room; only moving to the drawing-room when she awoke. Great ceremony was not observed at Avon House. Six or eight servants comprised the indoor household, for the Countess's jointure was extremely limited. The Avon peerage was not a rich one.

Mr. Baumgarten had held out his arm to Lady Grace in courtesy as they began to pace the paths, and she took it. They came to a halt near the entrance gate, both gazing at the beautiful sky, their hands partially shading their eyes from the blaze of sunset, when a little man dressed in black with a white neck-tie was seen approaching.

"Why, here comes Moore!" exclaimed Grace.

He was the clerk at Great Whitton Church. Limping up to the gate, for he was lame with rheumatism, he stood there and looked at Mr. Baumgarten, as if his business lay with him. But Grace, withdrawing her arm from her companion, was first at the gate.

"I beg pardon, my lady, I thought it right to come up and inform the Countess of the sad news—and I'm glad I did, seeing you here, sir. Mr. Chester is gone, my lady."

"Gone!" exclaimed Grace. "Gone where?"

"He is dead, my lady—he is dead, sir. Departed to that bourne whence no traveller returns," continued the clerk, wishing to be religiously impressive and believing he was quoting from Scripture.

"Surely it cannot be!" said Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ay, but it is, sir, more's the pity. And frightfully sudden. After getting home from afternoon service, he said he felt uncommonly tired, he couldn't think why, and that he'd not have his tea till later in the evening. He went up to his room and sat down in the easy chair there and dropped asleep. A sweet, tranquil sleep it was, to all appearance, and Mrs. Chester shut the door and left him. But

after an hour or two, when she sent up to say he had better wake up for his tea, they found him dead. The poor old lady is quite beside herself with the suddenness, and the maids be running about, all sixes and sevens."

"I will go down with you at once, Moore," said Mr. Baumgarten.

"But you will come back and tell us—and tell us how Mrs. Chester is?" said Lady Grace, as he was passing through the gate.

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it," he answered, walking away with so fleet a step that the clerk with difficulty kept up with him.

"I fancy it must have been on his mind, sir," said he; "not direct perhaps, but some inkling like of what was about to happen. This afternoon, when I'd took off his surplice in the vestry: it was him that had read prayers, as usual, Mr. Boyd preaching: I went and put things to rights a bit in the church, and when I got back to the vestry to lock up, I was surprised to see the Rector there still, sitting opposite the outer door, which stood open to the churchyard. Mr. Boyd was gone, but he was not. 'Don't you feel well, sir?' said I. 'Oh yes, I'm well,' he answered, 'but I'm tired. We must all get to feel tired when the end of our life is at hand, Moore, and mine has been a long one.' 'Yes, it has, sir, and a happy one too,' I said, 'thank God.' With that he rose up from his chair, and lifted his hands towards heaven, looking up at the blue sky. 'Thanks be to my merciful God,' he repeated, solemnly, in a hushed sort of tone. 'For that, and all the other blessings of my past life on earth, thanks be unto Him!' With that, he took his hat and stick and walked out to the churchyard," concluded the clerk, "leaving me a bit dazed as 'twere, for I had never heard him talk like that before; he was not the sort o' man to do it."

Within an hour Mr. Baumgarten was back at Avon House. Lady Grace was still lingering in the garden in the summer twilight. He told her in a hushed voice all he had to tell; of the general state of things at the Rectory, of poor Mrs. Chester's sad distress.

"Mamma is expecting you," said Grace. "I broke the news to her, but she wants to hear more particulars."

They went into the drawing-room by the open doors of the window. Mr. Baumgarten gave the best account he could to Lady Avon; and then drank a cup of tea, standing; he would not wait to sit down for it. Still asking questions, Grace passed out again with him to the open air, and strolled by his side along the smooth broad path which led to the entrance gate. When they reached it, he held out his hand to bid her good evening. The opal sky was clear and beautiful; a large star shone in it.

"Great Whitton is in my brother's gift," she whispered, as her hand rested in his. "I wish he would give it to you."

A flush rose to the young clergyman's face. To exchange Little Whitton for Great Whitton had now and then made one of the flighty dreams of his ambition—but never really cherished.

"Do not mock me with pleasant visions, Lady Grace. I can have no possible interest with Lord Avon."

"You could marry then," she softly said, in reference to the conversation at dinner, "and set the parish grumblers at defiance."

"Marry? Yes, I should—I hope—do so," was his reply. His voice was soft as her own; his speech hesitating; he was thinking of Edith Dane.

But how was Lady Grace to divine that? She, alas! gave altogether a different interpretation to the words; and her heart beat with a tender throbbing, and her lips parted with love and hope, and she gazed after him until he disappeared in the shadows of the sweet summer night.

CHAPTER II.

A CURIOUS MISTAKE.

THE Countess of Avon, persuaded into it by her daughter—badgered into it, her ladyship said—exactd a promise from her son that he would bestow the living of Great Whitton upon the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

The Earl did not give an immediate consent; in fact, he demurred to give it at all; and sundry letters passed to and fro between Avon House and Paris—for his lordship happened just then to have taken a run over to the French capital. Great Whitton was too good a thing to be thrown away upon young Baumgarten, who was nobody, he told his mother, and he should like to give it to Elliotsen; but Lady Avon, for peace sake at home, urged her petition strongly, and the Earl at length granted it and gave the promise.

The morning the letter arrived containing the promise, and also the information that his lordship was back at his house in London, Lady Avon was feeling unusually ill, and did not get up. Her head was aching violently, and she bade her maid put the letter aside; she would open it later. This she did in the afternoon, when she was sitting up in her dressing-room, and she then told Grace of the arrival of the unexpected promise.

"Oh, let me see it!" exclaimed Grace, in her incautious excitement, holding out her hand for the letter.

She read it hungrily, with flushing cheeks and trembling fingers. Lady Avon could but note this. It somewhat puzzled her.

"Grace," she said, "I cannot think why you should be so eager. What does it signify to you who gets the living?—whether Mr. Baumgarten or another?"

Grace read to the end and folded up the letter before answering. She was a model of calmness now.

"It would be very annoying to us, mamma, if some dolt of a man got it—and Henry, as you know, has no discrimination. Mr. Baum-

garten is safe. He is suitable in all respects; thoroughly capable, and a gentleman. Besides, *you* like him."

"Well, I do," assented Lady Avon.

In the evening, when Grace was sauntering listlessly in the rocky walk, wondering whether anyone would call that night or not, she saw him. *Him*. He was coming along the path from the Rectory. The old Rector had been buried some days now.

"I have been sitting with Mrs. Chester, and thought I would just ask, in passing, how Lady Avon is," he remarked, swinging through the gate, as if he would offer an apology for calling. "The last time I was here she seemed so very poorly."

"She is not any better, I am sorry to say; to-day she has not come downstairs at all," replied Grace, meeting his offered hand.

"What will you give me for some news I can tell you?" she resumed, standing before him in the full glow of her beauty, her hand not yet withdrawn from his.

He bent his sweet smile down upon her, his deep, dark eyes speaking the admiration that he might not utter. Ryle Baumgarten was no more insensible to the charms of a fascinating and beautiful girl than are other men—despite his love for Edith Dane. She was awaiting an answer.

"What may I give?" he said. "Nothing that I could give would be of value to you."

"How do you know that, Mr. Baumgarten?"

With a burning blush, for she had spoken unguardedly, Grace laughed merrily, stepped a few steps backward, and drew a letter from her pocket.

"It is one that came to mamma this morning and it has a secret in it. What *will* you give me to read you just one little sentence?"

Mr. Baumgarten, but that Edith and his calling were in the way, would have said a shower of kisses: it is possible that he might in spite of both, had he dared. Whether his looks betrayed him cannot be known; Lady Grace, blushing still, took refuge in the letter.

Folding it so that only the signature was visible, she held it out to him. He read the name, "Henry."

"Is it—from—Lord Avon?" he said, with hesitation.

"It is from Lord Avon. He does not sign himself in any other way to us. 'Your ever affectionate son, Henry,' it always runs to mamma: and it is no unmeaning phrase; he is very fond of her. But now for the secret. Listen."

Mr. Baumgarten, suspecting nothing, listened with a smile.

"I have been dunned with applications since I got home," read Grace, aloud, from Lord Avon's letter, "some of them from personal friends; but as you and Grace make so great a point of it, mother, I promise you that Mr. Baumgarten shall have Great Whitton." In reading, she had left out the words "and Grace." She closed the letter, and then stole a glance at his face.

It had turned pale to seriousness.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"No? It means that you are appointed to Great Whitton."

"How can I ever sufficiently thank Lord Avon?" he breathed forth.

"Now, is not the knowing that worth something?" laughed she.

"Oh, Lady Grace! It is worth far more than anything I have to give in return. But—it is not a jest, is it? Can it be really true?"

"A jest! Is that likely? You will be publicly appointed in a day or two, and will, of course, hear from my brother. I am not acquainted, myself, with the formal routine of these things. Mamma is rejoicing: she would rather have you here than anyone."

"Lady Avon is too kind," he murmured, abstractedly.

"And what do you think mamma said? Shall I tell you? 'Mr. Baumgarten can marry now.' Those were her words."

Grace spoke with sweet sauciness, secure in the fact that he could not divine her feelings for him—although she believed in his love for her. His answer surprised her.

"Yes, I can marry now," he assented, still half lost in his own thoughts. "I shall do so—soon. I have only waited until some preferment should justify it."

"You are a bold man, Mr. Baumgarten, to make so sure of the lady's consent. Have you asked it?"

"No; where was the use, until I could speak to some purpose? But she has detected my wishes, I am sure of that: and there is no coquetry in Edith."

"Edith!" almost shrieked Lady Grace. "I beg your pardon: I shall not fall."

"What have you done? You have hurt yourself!"

They had been walking close to the miniature rocks, and she had seemed to stumble over a projecting corner.

"I gave my ankle a twist. The pain was sharp," she moaned.

"Pray lean on me, Lady Grace; pray let me support you: you are as white as death."

He wound his arms gently round her, and laid her pallid face upon his shoulder: he thought she was going to faint. For one single moment she yielded to the fascination of the beloved resting-place. Oh! that it could be hers for ever! She shivered, raised her head, and drew away from him.

"Thank you," she said, faintly; "the anguish has passed. I must go indoors now."

Mr. Baumgarten held out his arm, but she did not take it, walking alone with rapid steps towards the house. At the entrance of the glass doors she turned to him.

"I will wish you good evening now."

He held out his hand, but she did not appear to see it. She ran in, and he turned away to depart, thinking she must be in great pain.

Lady Grace shut herself in the drawing-room. For a few moments

she rushed about like one possessed, in her torrent of anger. As Congreve tells us, "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned."

Then she sat down to her writing-desk and dashed off a blotted and hasty note to Lord Avon—which would just save the post.

"Give the living to anyone you please, Harry, but not to Ryle Baumgarten: bestow it where you will, but not on him. There are reasons why he would be utterly unfit for it. Explanations when we meet."

During this, Mr. Baumgarten was hastening home, the great news surging in his brain. Edith was at the gate, not looking for him, of course; merely enjoying the air of the summer's night. That's what she said she was doing when he came up. He caught her by the waist, and drew her between the trees and the privet-hedge, and began to kiss her. She cried out, and gazed at him in wonder.

"Edith, do you think I am mad? I believe I am—mad with joy; for the time has come that I may ask you to be my wife."

"Your wife?" she stammered, for in truth that prospect had seemed farther off than heaven.

He drew her to him again in the plenitude of his emotion. Her heart beat wildly against his, and he laid her face upon his breast, more fondly than he had laid another's, not long before.

"You know how I have loved you: you must have seen it, though I would not speak; but I could not marry while my income was so small. It would not have been right, Edith."

"If you think so—no."

"But, oh, my dearest, I may speak now. Will you be my wife?"

"But—what has happened?" she asked.

"Ah, what! Promotion has come to me, my dear one. I am presented to the living of Great Whitton."

"Of Great Whitton! Ryle!"

"It is quite sure. Lord Avon's mother asked him to give it to me, it seems, and he generously complied. Edith, will you reject me, now I have Great Whitton?"

She hid her face; she felt him lovingly stroking her hair. "I would not have rejected you when you had but Little Whitton, Ryle."

"Yours is not the first fair face which has been there this night, Edith, he said in a laughing whisper. "I had Lady Grace's there but an hour ago."

A shiver seemed to dart through her heart. Her jealousy of Lady Grace had been almost as powerful as her love for Mr. Baumgarten.

"Grace said, in a joking kind of way, that her mother had remarked I could marry now I had Great Whitton. So I told Grace that I should do so—one word leads to another, you know, Edith, and that I had only waited for preferment to marry you, my best love. As I was speaking, she managed somehow to twist her ankle. The pain must have been intense, for she turned as white as death, and

I had to hold her to me. But I did not pay myself for my trouble, as I am doing now—with kisses."

She lifted her face up and looked in his. "You would only have liked to do so, Ryle."

"I have liked to do so!" he repeated, smothering back a glimmer of consciousness. "Edith, my whole love is yours."

A little more love-making, a little more lingering in the soft shade of the evening twilight, and then they went in together and imparted the great news to Mrs. Dane

Some days passed on. Lady Avon rather wondered that she did not hear more from her son, but supposed he had written direct to Mr. Baumgarten. Grace said nothing. The two lovers, over at Whitton Cottage, were busily planning out the future.

One morning there was a startling announcement in the *Times*. As Lady Avon's eyes fell upon it, she truly thought they must be playing her false; that her sight was failing her.

The living of Great Whitton was bestowed upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen, a personal friend of the Earl of Avon.

Her ladyship called out for her daughter in commotion; she sent her maid, Charity, to hasten her. Grace feared her mother was worse, and flew to the room with rapid steps.

"What can be the meaning of this, Grace?" gasped the Countess. "Henry has not given the living to Mr. Baumgarten, after all; he has given it to young Elliotsen!"

"Oh, indeed," said Grace, carelessly. "Harry can do as he likes, I suppose."

"No, he can't, in such a case as this. At least he ought not. Once his promise was given to me, it should have been kept. I cannot understand his going from it. It is not like him."

"Well, mamma, I don't see that it matters to us, whichever way it may be."

"But it does matter. I don't want a simpering young fellow like Wilfred Elliotsen down here, and whose wife goes in for rank Puseyism besides. She has only been waiting for his appointment to a church, report says, to make him play all kinds of antics in it; she leads him by the nose."

Grace laughed.

"It is no laughing matter," reproved her mother, "for me or Mr. Baumgarten. I shall be ashamed to look him in the face. And he had begun to lay out plans for his marriage with Miss Dane and their life at Great Whitton!"

"How do you know that?" asked Grace, quickly.

"Mrs. Brice told me so when she was here yesterday," replied Lady Avon. She knew from the Danes that Ryle Baumgarten was to have Great Whitton and to marry Edith. Why Henry should be so changeable I cannot imagine."

Lady Avon was evidently very much annoyed, and justly so; annoyed at the fact, and annoyed because she was unable to understand her son, who was neither capricious nor inconsiderate. She wrote a letter of complaint to him that day, and awaited his answer.

The ill news broke abruptly upon Mr. Baumgarten. The little hard-worked, inoffensive doctor, Mr. Brice, who had a kind heart and never failed to have a kind word for his patients, chanced to see in the *Times* the same paragraph that Lady Avon saw, and on the same morning.

"Bless my heart," he exclaimed, "what an unlucky thing! How could Baumgarten have made such a mistake? He said Lady Grace told him. Perhaps it was she who mistook the matter!"

Away he hastened to Whitton Cottage, the newspaper in his pocket, and into the clergyman's presence, who sat in his little study writing a sermon. And when he got there, he felt at fault how to open the ball. It seemed so cruel a thing to do. Mr. Baumgarten, who looked gay and unconscious, led up to it.

"Have you heard any particular news this morning?" began the surgeon, after a few words had passed.

"No," lightly replied Mr. Baumgarten; "I've not seen anyone to tell me any; I have been busy since breakfast with my sermon for next Sunday. Nearly the last I shall preach at Little Whitton, I expect."

Mr. Brice coughed. "Have you heard from Lord Avon?" he asked.

"Not yet; I rather wonder at it. Every morning I look for a letter from him, but it does not come. He may be in France again for all I know myself; I don't like to call at Avon House until my appointment is confirmed. It would look pushing; as if I were impatient."

"Well, I—I saw a curious paragraph in the newspaper just now, about Great Whitton being given away; but it was another name that was mentioned, not yours," said Mr. Brice. "I thought I'd come here at once to see if you knew anything about it."

"Not anything; newspapers are always making mistakes," smiled Mr. Baumgarten.

Mr. Brice took the paper from his pocket. Finding the place, he laid it before the clergyman, who read it. Read it twice over, and began to feel somewhat less easy. He read it a third time, aloud.

"We are authorised to state that the valuable living of Great Whitton, Homeshire, has been bestowed by its Patron, the Earl of Avon, upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen."

There ensued a pause. The two gentlemen were looking at one another, each questioningly.

"It must be a mistake," said Mr. Baumgarten. "Lord Avon would not give the living to me, and then give it to someone else."

"The question is—did he give it to you?" returned Mr. Brice.

"Perhaps the mistake lies in your having thought so."

"I saw it in his own handwriting, in his letter to his mother.

Lady Grace showed it to me ; at least, a portion of it. He wrote in answer to an appeal Lady Avon had made to him to give me the living. His promise was a positive one. It is this newspaper that makes the mistake, Brice ; it cannot be otherwise."

"Anyway, we will hope so," briskly added the surgeon. But he spoke more confidently than he felt : and perhaps Mr. Baumgarten had done the same.

Lord Avon's reply to his mother's letter of complaint and inquiry came to her by return of post, and ran as follows :

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I cancelled my promise of giving the living to Baumgarten at Grace's request. She wrote to me post haste some days ago, telling me there were reasons why Baumgarten would be utterly unfit to hold Great Whitton, and begging me to bestow it upon anyone, rather than upon him. That is all I know ; you must ask an explanation of Grace. Of course, I assumed she was writing for you. It is settled now, and too late to change back again. Elliotsen will do very well in the living, I daresay. As to his wife wanting to turn and twist him to attempt foolish things in the church, as you seem to fear, I think it hardly likely. If she does, he must put her down.

"Ever your loving son, HENRY."

"Yes, I *did* write to Henry, mamma ; I *did* ask him not to give the living to Mr. Baumgarten," avowed Grace, with passionate emphasis, when questioned, her cheeks aflame, for the subject excited and tried her. "My reason was that I consider him an unfit man to hold it."

"Why, it was at your request that I asked Henry to give it to Mr. Baumgarten ; you let me have no peace until I consented," retorted Lady Avon.

"But, after reflection, I came to the conclusion that I ought not to have pressed it, that he ought not to have it, and would not do in it ; and the shortest way to mend the matter was by writing to Harry. That's all."

Lady Avon glanced keenly at her daughter. She was mentally asking herself what it all meant—the burning face, the tone sharp as a knife and telling of pain, the capricious conduct in regard to the preferment. But she could not tell ; she might have her suspicions, and very ridiculous suspicions too, not at all to be entertained ; but she could not tell.

"I am sorry that a daughter of mine should have condescended to behave so ; you best know what motive prompted it, Grace. To bestow a living and then snatch it away again in caprice is sheer child's play. It will be a cruel blow to Ryle Baumgarten."

A cruel blow it was. Lady Avon turned to her desk after speaking these words to her daughter, and began a note to the young clergyman, feeling very much humbled in mind as she wrote it. In the most plausible way she could, a lame way at best, she apologised for

the mistake which had been made, adding she hardly knew whether it might be attributed to her son, to herself, or to both, and pleaded for Mr. Baumgarten's forgiveness. This note she despatched by her footman to Whitton Cottage.

Mr. Baumgarten chanced to be standing in the house's little hall as the man approached. He received the note from him.

"Is there any answer to take back, sir? My lady did not say."

"I will see," replied Mr. Baumgarten. "Sit down, Robert."

Shutting himself into his study, he opened the note. For a few happy moments—if moments of suspense ever can be happy—he indulged in a vision that all might still be right; that the note was to tell him so. It was short, filling only one side of the paper, and he stood while he read it.

Before he had quite come to the end, before he had well gathered in its purport, a shock, singular in its effects, struck Mr. Baumgarten. Whether his breath stopped, or the circulation of his heart stopped, or the coursing of his pulses stopped, he could not have told; but he sank down in a chair powerless, the letter falling on the table from his nerveless hand. A strange, beating movement stirred him inwardly, his throat was gasping, his eyelids were fluttering, a sick faintness had seized upon him.

But that he struggled against it with desperate resolution, he believed he should have fainted. Once before he had felt something like this, when he was an undergraduate at Oxford, and he had been rowing against time to win a match. They said then, those around him, that he had over-exercised his strength. But he had not been exercising his strength now, and he was far worse this time than he had been then.

He sat perfectly still, his arms supported by the elbows of the chair, and recovered by degrees. After a bit, he took up Lady Avon's note to read it more fully, and then he knew and realised that all, to which he had been so ardently looking forward, was at an end.

The servant was seated in the little hall, quietly waiting, when Mr. Baumgarten came out of his study.

"Her ladyship's note does not require an answer, Robert," he said with apparent coolness. "How is she to-day?"

"Middling, sir. She seemed much upset this morning, Charity told us, by a letter she got from his lordship in London," added Robert. "Good day, sir."

Mr. Baumgarten nodded in answer. He stood at the door looking out, apparently watching the man away. The sun was shining in Ryle Baumgarten's face, but the sun which had been latterly shirring on his heart, illuminating it with colours of the brightest and sweetest phantasy—that sun seemed to have set for ever.

(To be continued.)

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

WE had been out shopping all the afternoon and got home, very tired, at ten minutes past six. Aunt Di was cross. We must be keeping the dinner waiting, she said, and she laid the blame upon me. Eva Bellair ran into the hall as we entered, and were putting down sundry small parcels on the slab.

"Dinner's waiting, Miss Dinah," she said. "It's past six."

"I know it," returned Aunt Di snappishly. "It is Grace's fault—looking for half an hour at a frock-piece or a ribbon before she decides upon it!"

"Oh, Aunt Di, I'm not as bad as that," I said. "We had a good many things to buy, you know; and in a little country place like this, with just its one or two drapers' shops in it, we have not the choice that is put before us in large towns."

"And in choosing things for one's wedding, one must be particular, Miss Di," put in Eva.

Her tone was peculiar, full of covert mockery, and I turned from the slab to look at her. I was beginning to doubt Eva's good faith; I had doubted it for some little time. She looked wondrously beautiful. A slight, graceful figure, standing there in her dinner dress of soft pink cashmere, faced with satin, adorned with lace; her keen eyes, of violet, veiled within their long lashes, her expression of face innocent as the day. But I doubted her.

Aunt Dinah was going up the stairs. "You can tell them to serve dinner," she said to Eva. "I shall not be long."

Neither was I long. In five minutes I had changed my frock—as we girls called it then—for my simple black silk, with its bit of good white lace at the throat and wrists. We were still in slight mourning for my father. As I stood hastily doing my hair, the glass gave back a pleasant thoughtful face, though not a handsome one. The auburn hair was soft and silky, the complexion fair, the grey eyes were steadfast, honest eyes, the features insignificant, nothing to boast of. All the time I was contrasting my poor face in a sad sort of manner with the handsome face, the brilliant colour and the flashing violet eyes of Eva Bellair. Alas, I had reason to fear she was stealing my lover from me.

They were going in to dinner when I went downstairs. Aunt Di had done nothing in the way of dress, except to put on a smart cap with peach blossoms in it; she was too tired, she said. She took the head of the table as usual, and Margaret went into Tom's place at the foot; I and Eva sat side by side, opposite the fire. Tom had not come home to dinner that evening; it sometimes happened so.

We lived plainly. The superfluities of modern days had not then

come into fashion for simple families. Dinner was soon over, and we went back to the drawing-room.

It was a double-room ; a good sized one and a small one, opening to each other. Aunt Di went at once to the smaller one, as she generally did, and seated herself on the capacious old sofa. She liked to be away from our chatter in the other room she told us. Presently I followed her, and sat down at the table with my work. A girl on the point of marriage has no end of sewing to do. Mine, this evening, lay in hemming strips of fine muslin.

My father, Thomas East, had been the chief solicitor in Pressgate. He had a large practice, both town and country, and was universally respected as a man of integrity, clever and painstaking. But he died early ; just as Tom, our only brother, was of age and able to succeed him. Our mother had died years before, and her sister, Aunt Dinah, Miss Richardson by title, had then come to take care of me and Margaret. She continued with us after papa died, all things going on in the home as before. Papa had died well off ; leaving three hundred a year to each of us, his two daughters ; which would descend afterwards to our children if we married and had any. Aunt Di had her own money ; a nice little fortune.

I was already engaged—to Lionel Payne. He was a civil engineer, steady and clever, and likely to get on in his profession. We were first engaged in the spring, and it was now October. During most of the interval he had been in Sweden, superintending the making of a railway. He there met with an accident, upon which fever supervened, and he was sent home to recover health and strength. In January he was to go back to Sweden, and—I with him. Meanwhile, now that he was better, he busied himself with some local works belonging to the same company.

About six weeks ago there came to us on a visit, Eva Bellair. Her mother had been a cousin of papa's, had married an officer in the army, and gone out with him to the West Indies. There Captain Bellair had died, and Eva, the only child, was sent to England for her education, her vacations being spent with some relative of her father's. This relative was aged and ill ; Eva, who had now left school, no doubt found her house dull, and she wrote offering to pay a visit to us. I and Margaret eagerly accepted it : girls are ever ready for fresh companions.

Eva was beautiful, without doubt. She was vain and worldly to her fingers' ends ; but—was she also deceitful ?

I think Lionel had been taken with her when she came. She seemed to burst upon us all as a lovely vision, capturing our hearts by storm. The only one she did not fascinate was Tom. It was singular that Tom had disliked her at first sight ; she gave him a feeling of aversion instead of the opposite.

"Fall in love with *her* !" cried he, when, coming home from church in a storm the first Sunday, he had held the umbrella over

her, and we, sister-like, teased him afterwards. "Look here, girls; if I were obliged to make a choice from the two, I'd rather take old Aunt Di."

And Tom had never swerved from that day to this. Courteous he ever was to Eva, as his guest—for, in good truth, the house was Tom's, not ours—but there his attentions ended. In her quiet, covert way, she had tried to get up a flirtation with Tom; but, to use his own words, he would not see it. And this left only Lionel Payne to fall back upon.

"She would have liked Tom," remarked Aunt Dinah, shrewdly, who saw more sometimes than we gave her credit for. "Tom is a good match for any girl, and she has not a penny piece in the world. But I should not like Tom to have *her*."

I was hemming away at my muslin, and Aunt Di nodded over her knitting, when Mr. Payne came in. He was of middle height, with fair whiskers, and a handsome, though perhaps undecided face, with a peculiarly sad look in his hazel eyes. Shaking hands with us all, he stayed talking a little with me, chiefly about the weather, and then went back to the larger room.

Presently it struck me that they were very quiet. Margaret was copying music at the table; Lionel and Eva, seated near the fire, had their heads together over a skein of crimson silk, which resisted their best endeavours in its determination not to be wound properly. These two were excellent friends now; more than friends, one might say; but when she came first and had her eye fixed on Tom, she could not tolerate Lionel. I verily believe they hated each other, after a polite, well-bred fashion; and Eva was lavish of her veiled sarcasms on him behind his back. But all that had changed now.

"Yes, I suppose it's all very right and proper," I said to myself, as I watched them whispering together over the silk. And yet—was he learning to love her?—had she cast her spells over him to that extent? If not, why did he linger with her night after night, and neglect me?

With an irritation which did not often trouble me, I threw down my work and went to vent my spleen on the piano; which, alarmed and indignant at such usage from my usually gentle fingers, resounded like thunder for a few moments, and finally died away in low murmurs faint as the whispers of an accusing spirit.

With one hand wandering in listless apathy over the keys, I turned half round to find that Margaret had left the room. The other two were talking by the fire, far enough away from me. Lionel had his back towards me, and I could only see his profile. Miss Bellair stood in front of him, the light from the chandelier falling in soft showers on her graceful head and raven hair. With a nameless pang I felt that my presence was forgotten, or unregarded; and yet, as I watched the ever-varying expression of her radiant face, and mentally contrasted it with my own pale features, I did not wonder.

They were talking of flowers, I think, for she held in her hand a ruby glass vase, in which was a tiny bouquet I had that morning culled from a few pet plants, relics of the summer, which, by dint of coaxing and divers placings in sunny corners, where the warm light would shine upon them, had been persuaded to bloom into the autumn. Her restless fingers were busy arranging a bud here, a leaf there, and then holding it out, as if to take in the artistic effect. Presently Lionel stretched up his hand to a painting which hung beside the glass over the mantelpiece. It was a likeness of Aunt Di, taken when she was young and fair. The previous day had been her birthday, and we girls had intertwined branches of green cedar with the open carved oak frame. Lionel now broke off a spray of the cedar, put it with a rose he had taken from the vase, and then presented it to Eva. She took it with a heightened bloom, and a half smile rippled on her lips as she held it to them.

What was there in all this to send the blood rushing in great surges of pain to my heart, though I strove to tell myself it might be only pastime? At that moment my brother Tom came in, bringing a gentleman who was quite a stranger. "Grace," he said, "you have heard me speak of this friend—Mr. Malcolm. My younger sister Grace," he added to the guest.

I felt bewildered, unable to respond. Tom looked as if he thought I must have been taking a stolen nap, and had not properly awakened from it.

For the scene I had just witnessed was full of hidden suggestions. Once, before Lionel and I had plighted our troth openly, he had sent me a spray of the cedar tree, and was anxious that I should know the language of the gift—"I live for thee."

How I got through that evening I never knew. There was an infinite deal of general laughing and talking, and I have a confused remembrance of a long conversation with Mr. Malcolm, of which literature formed the chief theme. He was evidently a well-read man; had distinguished himself at Cambridge; and—he appeared to be very much taken with me!

Lionel went away first, saying he had letters to write, and shaking hands in his easy, quiet way, with two or three of us. When my turn came I hoped he might give me a tender word or glance. He did nothing of the kind; only laid his fingers quietly in mine for a moment, and wished me a cold good evening. That night I lay and cried after everybody else in the house must have been asleep. A feeling lay upon me that he was hopelessly bewitched by Eva, and that our love was over.

"Who is Mr. Malcolm?" asked Eva the next morning at breakfast.

"A downright good fellow," answered Tom; which might not have been the answer she expected.

"Where does he live?"

"Just now he is living at the Queen's Hotel in this town. He has just come into an estate four miles off, and into some complicated law business as well, which I am trying to disentangle for him."

"An estate four miles off!" repeated Aunt Di, looking up. "Do you mean Malcolm Park, Tom?"

"Just so, Aunt Di."

"Well, I never!" cried aunt. "You ought to have said so last night, Tom. I had no idea he was one of those Malcolms."

"Is the estate a large one, Mr. Tom?" asked Eva.

"Very fair in a moderate way—about three thousand a year," replied Tom.

Eva opened her eyes. "Three thousand a year! Is he married, Mr. Tom?"

"Not that I know of," was Tom's short answer.

They all went out that night to a lecture. I excused myself, and waited at home, hoping for Lionel Payne.

He did not come quickly. At eight o'clock I grew uneasy. Half-past eight, hopeful still, I turned down the gas in the parlour, drew up the blind, and sat by the window, looking out upon the moonlight. Presently, one, two, three—nine strokes pealed, like a knell, from the old church not far off; and I knew it was useless to watch for him now.

But no; a ring sounded at the gate bell, and I saw one of the servants go out to answer it. It was only a parcel. It was not he. I sat back in my chair and closed my eyes, half sick with the disappointment. He must have gone to the lectures to join Eva.

When I looked up from my despair the room had turned dark and chilly. A cloud was passing over the moon. In my heart were shadows too. I burst into a flood of bitter tears; and, covering my face with my hands, sobbed aloud. It was very silly and undignified; but the stricken spirit gives way at times.

"Why, Grace, what is the matter?"

Had anyone shot me, I could not have started up more quickly. Lionel stood there. In my sobbing I had not heard him enter.

He drew a chair beside mine, and we sat talking in the moonlight. I let him gather what it was which caused my distress. At first he did not deny it or answer; he sat gazing outwards as if in thought, the sad expression in his eyes being very perceptible then.

"I never thought you were given to indulging fancies, Grace," he said at last.

"I do not think I have been."

"My dear—don't you know—don't you remember," he continued, his voice broken with an emotion at which I greatly wondered, "that I could not leave you for another without breaking our oath?"

"Lovers' vows are lightly kept," I answered.

"I regard that oath as a solemn obligation, Grace," he rejoined earnestly. "If ever I am tempted to break it—if ever *you* should

be tempted on your side, no luck, as I look upon it, will follow the delinquent."

"I shall never break it, Lionel. I shall be faithful unto death."

"And I also, Heaven helping me," he whispered, as he leaned towards me and kissed my lips.

The kiss was followed by a heavy sigh. He seemed ill at ease. I think his love *had* left me, despite the kiss and the words.

Voices at the gate proclaimed their return from the lecture. I got up in a fright to run to the drawing-room. Aunt Dinah would have scolded at our sitting in the little parlour without lights.

It was in that same little parlour, lighted then by the spring moon, that I and Lionel Payne had made our betrothal. Aunt Di was in bed with headache that evening; Margaret was gone up to give her some tea, and we were alone. "I swear to you, Grace, upon my solemn oath before Heaven, to be faithful to you until death shall part us," he had said standing, his hands lifted—and he had made me take the same oath. Well, I asked nothing better than to keep it. But would he?

II.

As the weeks went on, events went on with them. David Malcolm became a frequent visitor at our house. He was a companionable earnest-minded man of about thirty years, who had travelled a good deal and was full of information. Not to be called a handsome man by any means, but when he smiled his face seemed to light up all over, and his brown eyes had a kindly laugh in them.

Eva Bellair made a dead set at him: a man possessing three thousand a year was worth it. But Mr. Malcolm did not respond. Like Tom, he allowed it to be seen that he should never care for her. So she threw her forces back with redoubled strength upon Lionel.

And he seemed to drift away from me. Never another loving word had been spoken by him to me since that night when he reminded me of his oath—and mine. Eva seemed to possess for him the fascination of a basilisk. It was with Eva he lingered; with her he played at dominoes; over her he leaned to turn her music, his own fair head touching her purple-black hair. What was to come of it? What would be the ending?

I don't think I had ever been so much taken to as one afternoon when David Malcolm came in and made me an offer of marriage. The rest were out, and he had found me alone. I stood like a simpleton, utterly at a loss for words.

"Don't you care for me, Miss East? Don't you think you can learn to care for me?" he implored, in my stupid silence.

"Oh, I care for you very much; that is, I like you very much, but not in that way," I stammered at last. "I cannot be your wife; it is impossible."

"Why is it impossible?"

I felt my face burning. "Did you not know," I murmured, "that I am going to marry Mr. Payne?"

"But are you going to marry him?—is he going to marry you? I do not think it looks like it," he said.

"You knew of it, then?"

"I know what your brother has told me: that you *were* engaged to him. But surely you cannot allow yourself to be so still?"

What with one thing or another—the home truth in these words, and the mortification it brought, and my shyness just now altogether, which told upon me, I burst into tears. David Malcolm took my hand, and spoke to me soothingly.

"I have been too hasty," he continued; "I should have had patience and waited. My dear—for indeed you will ever be dear to me—we will defer ——"

"But indeed I am not able to marry you, now or ever," I interrupted—and I had half a mind to tell him of the oath which I had taken to be faithful to Lionel Payne, whatever might betide, until death. "I thank you very truly for your kindness to me, Mr. Malcolm, and for what you have said; but I can never marry you."

"We shall see," he cheerfully concluded, with the sunny smile in his eyes and on his lips. We did not speak of this offer, either he or I. It remained a secret between us.

One day Aunt Di, in her old-world, straightforward way, took Eva Bellair to task. "What do you mean by monopolising Mr. Payne whenever he is here?" she asked. "It is unseemly."

"Unseemly?" repeated Eva, jestingly. "Oh, Miss Di!"

"You know that he is shortly to marry Grace?"

"Oh, he only laughs and talks a bit with me," said Eva. "There's no harm in that, Miss Dinah—they are not married yet."

We had some intimate friends, the Bettingtons, living in a pretty house, Danvers Cottage, at the other end of Pressgate. They were, like many other people, much taken with Eva, and she was invited to stay at their house.

"And that will terminate your visit to us, Miss Bellair," said Aunt Di, straightforwardly. "Your own people will, of course, be wanting you back for Christmas."

It was a bitter November day, the day Eva went to the Bettingtons, with December near at hand. "I shall have Lionel to myself now," ran my thought; which was all the regret I threw after her.

But there is an old saying which tells you not to reckon without your host. I had reckoned without Lionel. For one evening that he passed with us, he spent five or six at Danvers Cottage.

Some star in the actress line came to Pressgate, and there was a grand performance given in the theatre. Tom took a box for us. Chancing to meet Lionel Payne the same morning, he told him

there would be room for him if he liked to come, but Lionel, while thanking him, said he feared he was engaged.

And when we got there a little late, for Tom was detained by a client, there in a box on the opposite side, sat Lionel with the Bettingtons and Eva Bellair; Eva next to him. She had a glittering diamond locket on her neck, and I wondered who had given it to her. No girl in the house was so lovely as she, with her flashing violet eyes and purple-black hair, her rose-tinted cheeks, and her animation. His fair head was bending to her perpetually, almost touching her pretty ear now and again. Behind *my* chair sat David Malcolm, talking to me in a low voice at intervals: but never an allusion did he make to the opposite box.

"Grace East must be a simpleton to persist in her engagement to young Payne!" said one lady to another. "It is easy to be seen where his love is lavished."

"Possibly it never was given to Grace," answered the other. "She has three hundred a year, you know; Lionel Payne's attraction may have lain in *that*."

"Any way, he is behaving very badly now."

This conversation, its freedom proving that the speakers spoke for their own ears only, reached Tom. He had gone into a box which joined theirs, and overheard it. When he came back to us, a dark frown disfigured his usually pleasant face. The performance came to a close, and we went home, Lionel never having come near our box.

Aunt Dinah very soon wished Tom good night, and departed to bed, saying she was tired. Margaret followed her from the room. I was following Margaret, when Tom laid his hand upon my arm, and shut the door.

"Stay here a minute or two, Grace," he said. "I want to speak to you."

"Yes?" I answered, going back to stand near the bright embers of the decaying fire, my heart beating wildly.

"You must be aware that this thing must end, Grace."

I did not ask him what thing. I knew too well. "But how can it?" I asked. "What can be done?"

"I will see what—with to-morrow's dawn," he quickly answered.

"I did not like to act without first speaking to you, my dear."

"It may be just a—glamour, Tom. A craze which has come over him for the moment, and—and will pass away. I cannot see how we are to part."

Tom looked at me. "Not see how? Don't you *wish* it, Grace? after that spectacle presented to your eyes to-night, and all his recent neglect? Nothing is more easy."

I was thinking of our oath. Turning my head a little from Tom, I told him of it in a whisper. My mood was tragic enough. Tom's was not. He burst into a laugh.

"That's the best joke I've heard for many a week, Gracie. Quite romantic! Sworn, have you, to be true to one another till death?"

"Yes. 'Faithful unto death.' Only a little while ago—since this trouble began—he told me he should keep it. So shall I."

Tom was silent.

"Any way, Grace, he must choose between you," he spoke, after consideration. "I should, in your place, call my own proper pride to my aid, and fling him to the winds. He shall not carry on with both of you; rely upon that. If he chooses (as you seem to wish it) to come back to his allegiance, he must not again meet Eva Bellair. If he prefers her, why then I hope I need not suggest how you, Grace, ought to act, oath or no oath."

Tom was as good as his word. The first thing he did after breakfast the next morning, was to present himself at Lionel Payne's rooms: and there he learnt that Fate had been, so to say, quicker than he.

When Lionel got home the previous night, after leaving the theatre, he found a telegram awaiting him from Sweden. Some mischief had occurred in the works then in process there, and Lionel was needed. The order to him was imperative—to set off without an hour's delay.

As Tom went in, Lionel was fastening down his portmanteau and collecting his rugs and overcoats together. Another minute or two must see him on his way to the train, if he would catch it. What passed between them I do not know; it could not have been much. Lionel said, looking very foolish, that he was aware the present state of affairs could not and ought not to go on; that as he sat at the theatre last night he had taken more shame to himself than anybody else could award him, and had resolved there and then that it should end. He added that he would write to me; on the journey if he could possibly get a moment for it; if not, as soon as he reached Sweden.

The letter came to me; it had been written in pencil on his knees as he travelled along in the train. It was, if I may so put it, an abject kind of letter, betokening misery. He did not expressly release me; but he said that he knew I must consider him too contemptible to retain any regard for him; and that his best and only plan now was to remain in Sweden for good, away from the civilized world. As to Miss Bellair, he should never again see her. The spell of infatuation which had seized hold of him, and he had been weak and wicked enough to yield to, was gone for ever.

That was the substance of the letter. It did not say, "will you in future, when my time of penitence shall have spent itself, suffer our engagement to be renewed;" but yet, it did not explicitly release me from it. The oath was not alluded to by word or hint.

III.

WEEKS and months went by. David Malcolm was frequently at our house, and it was quite an open secret that he came for my sake. Once, and once only, he renewed his offer to me. I told him that I was still bound to Lionel Payne; for so indeed I considered myself to be. But for that—how gladly would I have married David!

I began to grow pale and thin. Every day almost I was in dread of receiving a letter from Lionel reminding me of my vow and asking me to be his wife. But no such letter came; business people heard from him occasionally, but that was all. He was very busy in Sweden, and his work was evidently appreciated, for his salary, we heard, had been raised, and he had now seven hundred a year.

"My dear, how long is our probation to last?" David Malcolm said to me one day when we were alone. "Is it that which is wearing you out, Gracie? Oh, my darling, if you would but come to me and let me comfort you!"

And all the answer I could make him was to burst into tears.

One night in June, when the nights are at the shortest and the days at the longest, a strange thing happened to me. Aunt Dinah was ill. I had wished to sit up with her, proposing to snatch a bit of sleep in the easy chair in her room; but aunt would not hear of it. She was not so ill as all that, she said, and could call to me if she wanted anything in the night, or ring up Rachel.

It was a bright and beautiful night. At a quarter to twelve, when I entered my bedroom after lingering with Aunt Di, the large moon was shining in the clear sky. I did not undress. Sitting down in a low chair by the bedside, and leaning my head upon the pillow, I determined to keep awake in case Aunt Di should call.

Instead of which, I fell asleep almost immediately. I had quite lost consciousness, when I woke with a start at some noise, real or fancied, that sounded exactly like a knock at the front-door. Sitting up, I listened.

There was no further knock, but it seemed to me that the door opened and that someone came into the hall. What could it mean? What did it mean? The door must have been locked as usual, or ought to have been.

Everyone was in bed. I had been the last up. Tom was gone and the servants were gone; I had stayed after them with Aunt Di. Margaret was out on a visit. It was not possible, I told myself, that anyone had come in.

But now, as I listened, I thought I heard faint, slow footsteps ascending the stairs. Terror seized upon me. My ideas flew to robbers; perhaps naturally enough. Stealing across the carpet to my door, I noiselessly drew it open and peeped out.

My door was nearly at the end of a rather long corridor, close to the large end window, before which the white blind was drawn

against the moonlight. The next door but one to mine was Aunt Dinah's; opposite was Tom's; and at the other end was the staircase. The gas-jet had not been put out, on account of Aunt Di's illness, and the corridor was as light as day.

I could see nothing unusual. Still, hardly daring to breathe, I thought I heard those slow, soft steps ascending. But I called to mind what tricks the imagination plays us in the night, especially when rendered anxious by illness in the house, and I told myself I must be mistaken.

Taking courage, I advanced a pace or two. Keeping my eyes strained on the staircase, I saw the intruder come into view. He seemed to bring a deadly cold with him, for a blast as of an approaching iceberg struck upon me. I did not scream. I did not dash into my own room, or into Tom's for protection, for I had instantaneously recognised him, and all other emotion gave place to astonishment.

It was Lionel Payne.

He looked just as he used to look, except for an intense pallor. I had never seen a face so pale before. He wore no hat, and his coat, a dark frock, was buttoned up close to his chin. He advanced slowly and soundlessly along the passage, his right hand held out towards me, his gaze fixed on mine.

I went forward to meet him; we met close to Aunt Dinah's door. Putting out my hand to his, I found he did not take it; instead of that, his own dropped. His face looked frightfully white and mournful; his eyes, fixed on mine, had a startling sadness in them. The cold of the air and the strange gaze set me shivering.

"How did you get in, Lionel?" I asked. "What have you come for, at this hour?"

He made no reply, but passed onwards behind me, and I certainly heard him sigh. A deep, long-drawn sigh, which died away on the air. I turned to look after him, and——could not see him.

Had he gone into my room? There was no other door open: yet he had not had time to reach it. I went to my room, and looked in. But he was not there.

Utterly bewildered, I turned to the corridor again. He was not in it: and the cold blast which had chilled me was not in it either; the temperature had returned to its previous warmth, that of a summer night.

"Lionel!" I called out. "Mr Payne!"

Tom's door opened then, and Tom stood at it, half dressed.

"What is it, Grace?" he asked. "Is Aunt Di worse?"

"Tom, I want to speak to you—no, no, it's not Aunt Di."

I was beginning to shiver and shake, for a frightful dread had come rushing over me. Crossing over to my brother for protection I told him all.

"Grace, child, you must have dreamt it," he said, soothingly

"Don't, Tom; don't say that. I was as wide awake from the first as I am now. Do you not see what it must have been?"

"My dear, I only see that your nerves are all abroad. Look at the thing practically: he *could not* have come in. I was late to-night, you know, getting on for eleven, and I locked and bolted the front door myself when I came in."

"It was Lionel, Tom, but not in life," I shivered. "Lionel Payne is dead; he appeared to me in spirit. He came to let me know it. If it was *not* his apparition, if it was himself, where has he disappeared to?"

"I'll look about a bit," said Tom. "Some thieving fellow may have got in through one of the windows. Prowling about to see what he can pick up!"

"Do you think I could mistake anyone else for him?" I sadly said. "He was not altered at all—except that he looked strangely pale and mournful."

Tom looked about the passage and into the two unused chambers, one of them near the head of the staircase; then he went below. I went with him, simply because I dared not stay alone. The front door was locked, as he said; no one could have come in at it; the windows were all fast. I think Tom felt puzzled.

Aunt Di was coughing when our survey came to an end. I shut myself into her room until the morning.

News, by telegram, reached Pressgate from Sweden that same afternoon. Lionel Payne had met with an accident on the rails the previous evening; he had died about midnight.

It was about midnight that I saw him. That he had most assuredly appeared to me—come to tell me of it—there could be no manner of doubt. It was his way of showing me that the oath which had bound us together was at an end—as I believe, and always shall believe. Even sceptical Tom came round in a degree to my way of thinking; he was brought to admit that I must have seen a figure, which was wholly unaccounted for.

We did not tell Aunt Di, or Margaret when she returned; we did not make it known to the world; but we often talked of it with hushed breath between ourselves—Tom and I and David Malcolm. Being of Scotch descent, *he* believed that it might be as I maintained.

Lionel died in June. In September I became David Malcolm's wife. And I wish every girl could find as good a husband and be as happy as I am!

Eva Bellair? She went home to her mother in the West Indies that same year, and by the last mail we received wedding cards. Eva had espoused an old man who had grown rich on a sugar plantation.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



PALMA.

WRITTEN to a very near friend in England, these letters occasionally contain personal remarks that may seem of little interest to anyone without the "charmed circle;" an inevitable feature in all correspondence not originally intended for publication. Where such passages may occur, it is hoped that the indulgence of the reader will be freely given.

On the other hand, impressions recorded in the present form may, perhaps, prove somewhat more entertaining than the more direct manner of noting incidents of travel.

Be this as it may, it is thought better to issue the following pages almost as

they were first written, rather than, by pruning, deprive them of any little life and virtue they may possess.

For the freer and more intimate tone adopted, every allowance must be made: and if the writer seems for a moment to be "taking the reader into his confidence," he prays for the exercise of that charity which "beareth all things" and "is not easily provoked."

Palma, Nov. 10th, 1886.

MY DEAR E.—At your own request I promised to send you a true and faithful account of my visit to the Balearic Islands, minute in all particulars and details of description. If, therefore, my letters should become to you a weariness to the flesh, blame your own indiscretion, not the shortcomings of my pen. "Ferdinando, Ferdinando, no man

can do more than he can do!" I fear that you will sometimes say he might have done a great deal less.

With this gentle warning, I dismiss all further apology, and begin at the beginning.

This beginning, as you know, was the 9.40 train from Charing Cross for Folkestone and Boulogne. How many times have I not travelled that route, under all sorts and conditions of weather, bound for some fair spot in La belle France, which to you and to me happens to possess the additional charm and association of home and birthland! Every step of the way is full of happy recollections in the past, and, I hope, of experiences in the future.

That 9.40 train was, to some extent, a leap in the dark. You are aware how impossible it seemed to find out anything in London about the Balearic Islands, either as to their more prominent features or the best way of getting to them. One knew of boats running from Barcelona and Valencia, but how often, and on what days, could not be discovered. Even at the office of Messrs. Cook and Co., those great Purveyors of the Picturesque to the Public, no information was forthcoming. They did all in their power; were, as usual, polite and painstaking; hunted up books and time tables; yet without result. One clerk, indeed, suggested that the P. and O. boats ran regularly to Gibraltar, making it somewhat hard work to keep up a becoming dignity. The visit ended in nothing more than a suggestion that I should telegraph to the British Consul at Barcelona, asking him as a favour to telegraph back the days of departure for Palma. This was done, and the reply carefully franked. None was forthcoming. Like Poe's raven,

"Not the least obeisance made he,
Not a moment stopped or stayed he."

I confess that I was surprised, though I thought it probable that the explanation lay with the telegraph officials. So it proved: for on calling on Mr. Wooldridge at Barcelona, who received me with every courtesy, he said that he had duly telegraphed the information—and this, owing to carelessness in Spain or England, I had not received.

Thus, having done my best and failed, there was nothing for it but to take this first step in the dark, and trust to chance. The event proved that we could not have acted more apropos. H. C. was my travelling companion, and revelled in the idea of crossing the Channel, that *mauvais quart d'heure* to the larger portion of mankind. I see you smiling, but assure you that I mean nothing personal.

At Folkestone he thought the sea looking deliciously calm. I knew better, but it is wiser to let people find out things for themselves. Even in the harbour, we found no very steady foothold. Once outside, the sea was disagreeable and choppy—one of the unpleasantest motions I ever remember. It was bitterly cold,

and a strong north-easter was blowing. The sea broke over the vessel and drenched the decks. Even the bridge did not escape. There H. C. took up his station, and presently succumbed. The waves were cruel to him in a twofold sense. Before long, he had not only discovered that he was mortal, and that the Joys of Fulfilment are very different from the Pleasures of Hope, but to add to his cup of misery, he was soon wet through and through. He pretended to think it delightful, and I affected to believe him. We must occasionally sacrifice to courtesy.

* For my own part, waves may beat and winds blow ; it is all one ; cold, and cold only, finds out the weak joints in my armour. I took refuge in the depths of the lowest cabin, and never moved until safe in Boulogne harbour.

The piers stretched on either side like arms of welcome. How many times have they not done so ? How many happy hours have we not spent at the Hôtel des Bains ? The first person to arrest me on landing was the Commissionaire, who made special inquiries after every one, and regretted that I was going straight through to Paris. They are always polite, these people, and would have you believe that your presence makes *la pluie et le beau temps* for them and for the world at large. This is one of those phrases that are not to be translated, and may be allowed to stand in the original.

Twenty minutes were devoted to the buffet, where even H. C. did not waste his time. Nature has great powers of recovery. Old Joseph waited upon us, and regretted the days when "he had the honour of serving Monsieur à l'Hôtel des Bains." To say the truth, I had forgotten his honest old face, and thought of the proverb, "More knows Tom Fool," &c. Joseph, however, was depressed at this want of memory ; it was paying him a bad compliment ; and the *amende honorable* had to be made in more substantial form than a mere compliment, bad or good.

Presently the train moved slowly towards the station through the lines of shipping in port and basin. The scene you know so well was gay and sparkling as ever. Above the quay and the vessels rose the old fishing town, gray, ancient, dilapidated and picturesque as usual. It was here that, a year ago, I found H. minor mobbed by a crowd of boys who had stolen his kite, and whom he was pluckily tackling single-handed. In the upper town, the cathedral towered, or rather *domed*, above the ramparts : thin, consumptive-looking, yet finely placed. Through the sluices the water was rushing seawards, and only those who know Boulogne realise the merits of this systematic outpouring of the flood.

In the carriage we had a curious individual who had been our fellow traveller from London. His conversation was extremely entertaining ; his adventures were marvellous. This singular being was of "such stuff" as few men are made of ; would have posed as an excellent Faust, a Mephistopheles, a leader in Dante's *Inferno* (it

sounds better to call it Dante's); everything and anything in turn. He was an extraordinary mixture of all the learned professions, of active and business life, and of the pleasures of the world. He discoursed eloquently and learnedly about law, physics, music, the best authors of all nations, the best pictures; was equally at home in all: and equally familiar with horse racing.

He once shut himself up for six months in a monastery for the purpose of mastering a language that few care to attempt, and for company had only his piano, horse, dog, and a pet monkey. In short, there was nothing that he had not tried and apparently mastered. He was now on his way to the East, and was taking two hideous dogs with him. At the Paris station we parted, and could not well have done otherwise. We saw life from different points of view. There was a wild recklessness about him that even the soberness for which you know me distinguished would never have counterbalanced. We told him we were going through Spain, and he immediately thought he would come through Spain too; but at this we were seized with deafness, and changed the subject.

There was one trait about him which has always borne for me an indescribable charm, perhaps because my own peculiar temperament makes it so impossible to do likewise, except to the very closest friend. He was singularly frank and open about himself. All the good in him and all the bad came out equally freely; was poured forth like a torrent, without concealment or *arrière pensée*. "*Je suis ce que je suis.*" He withheld nothing. Personal idiosyncrasies, family matters, everything was stated with the most amazing candour.

You will say this was eminently indiscreet with a stranger, but in this instance, perhaps, it only proved that he knew how to choose his company. From Charing Cross to Paris I do not think he was silent for two minutes, and you can realise (or perhaps you cannot) the sudden calm that seemed to fall upon us as we left the Gare du Nord for the lively streets of the French capital.

Alas, how its glory falls. Who would know it again for the same town where, within a few years, I have spent so many happy days and months, had so many friends? And amongst all the social réünions, none were so pleasant as Mrs. Milner-Gibson's afternoons, whom a great man of his day considered the second most perfect hostess in the world, though it must have been difficult to excel her. It was only last year that we mourned her death. Those evenings, too, with Madame G., the handsomest woman in Paris, the most imposing, yet (rare combination) the most lovable! The glass of time ran in golden sands on those nights when she had not her brilliant receptions, and I was so often privileged to form one of a little intimate *parti carré* with the funny old Comtesse de Merinville, who invariably wore a mantilla, posed as a Spanish beauty (certainly a light of other days) and affected all the languid grace of an Andalusian!

Again, there were evenings with Julia Kavanagh—herself one of

the best and purest writers of her time—when she was wont to charm with the soft beauty of her large brown eyes, at once so full of sweetness and intellect, her fine brow and magnificent hair. How one delighted in her quiet tones, half English, half French, the excellence of her conversation, the depth and beauty of her ideas, her admirable judgment of books and authors.

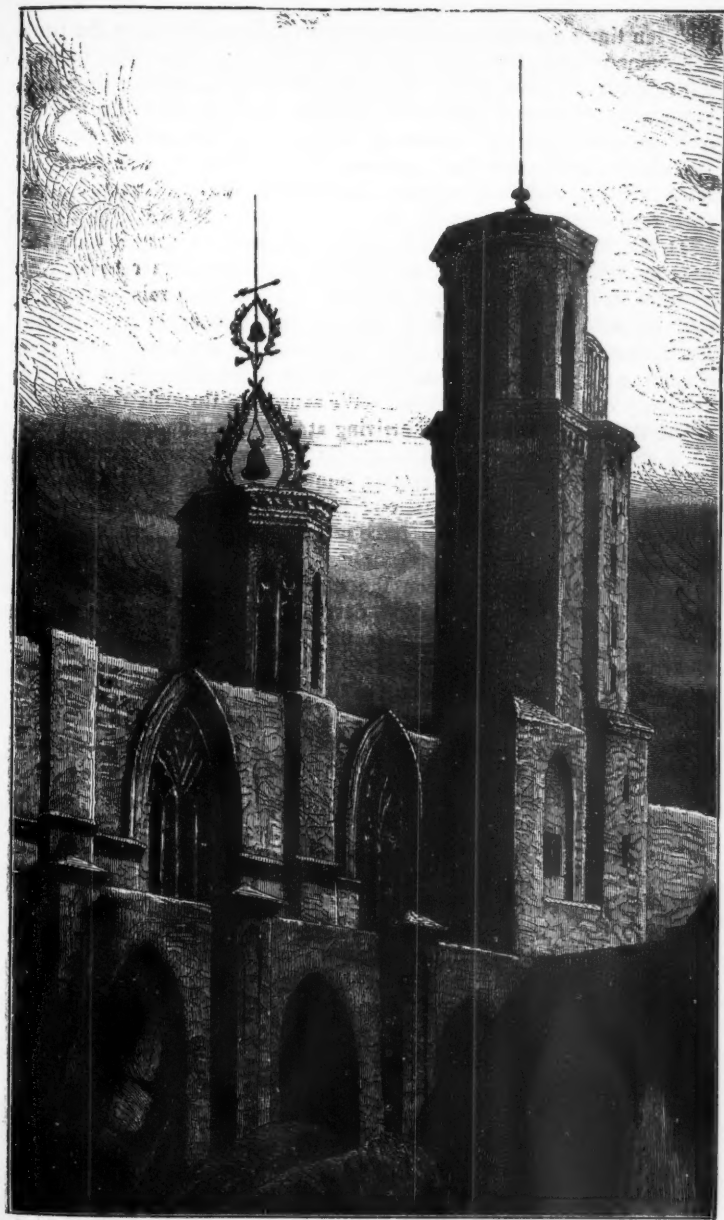
They deserted Paris and went southward to Nice, whence Julia Kavanagh's letters were always distinguished by an undertone of sadness of which the key note was "neuralgia."

Then came the fearfully sudden end; the cutting down of a life before its time; and a mother more than half blind left mourning for one who had been literally the light of her eyes—and for whom she still mourns. In the cemetery outside Nice, overlooking the town and the deep cliffs and the blue waters of the Mediterranean, in sight and sound of the sea she described so well, a large tomb of white marble, that is almost a chapel, marks the last resting-place of Julia Kavanagh. Even her pure and beautiful spirit could have desired and chosen no lovelier spot. Roses bloom there eternally; many of the trees do not shed their leaves; nature seems ever fair and young.

But I am wandering from my subject, as I fear I shall wander only too often in these letters, when I chance upon a topic that brings back scenes I have gone through, and people who have added, or still add, so much to the happiness of life.

In Paris we had decided to stay the night at the Hôtel Continental, though it is not a favourite of mine. But H. C. had never seen it, and large and gorgeous with a certain Eastern magnificence, it is rather typical of the capital. For a longer sojourn, and especially with ladies, the quietness and retirement of the Hôtel Bristol leave far less to be desired. I had written for rooms and we were expected. Table d'hôte had not begun when we arrived, but being a little late in coming down, we were refused admittance, though the room was not three parts full. This, of course, is done to send people into the restaurant, where you dine à la carte. Table d'hôte is seven francs, and is moderately good. Mr. B. dined with us that evening. Thus at the table d'hôte our sum total would have amounted to twenty-one francs, whilst in the restaurant for a more modest repast, the amount was brought up to forty-four francs.

I send you these small details, because everything of a domestic nature bears a charm to the female mind that beings of a sterner mould are unable to realise. Mr. B., whose life is devoted to the poor, happened to catch sight of the bill, and was shocked in thinking what a large number of his flock would have been kept for a week upon such a sum. It was useless to represent to him that the sum was a very modest one compared with scores that would be spent that night in Paris by epicures. He is doing a great and successful work amongst the French poor; never preaches less



BARCELONA.

than ten times a week, sometimes oftener. He realises also the truth of Solomon's wise proverb : "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days ;" for he tells me that many a time, and years after he has forgotten the incident and the individual, some one comes to him with a blessing and a happy face, and a reformed expression ; some one that, perhaps, he had tried to raise from the lowest depths, and who, weeping, declares that, under Heaven, he was their rescuer and upholder.

H. C. had never seen Paris, and as we were to leave it early the next morning for Bordeaux, we strolled out after dinner to look at some of its finer features by moonlight. It had been raining heavily, and Paris in rainy weather is almost as disagreeable as London. Dark clouds rolled across the sky, throwing deep shadows, now obscuring the moon, now allowing it to shine forth with all the brilliancy of a Paris atmosphere. We sauntered through the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, and on arriving at the other end, the rain was good enough to cease. H. C.'s artistic taste was much exercised by the beauty of the Tour St. Jacques, one of the loveliest Gothic monuments in existence. In the strong moonlight it looked wonderfully refined, and we were able to trace much of the ornamentation even of its upper portion.

Beyond this we came upon the new Hôtel de Ville. Whatever may have been the lost building, destroyed by those terrible Goths and Vandals, the modern one is undoubtedly very imposing. It looked so at least to-night, lighted up by a mixture of gas and electric jets, and the silvery moon sailing in the deep blue sky.

Then we crossed over to Nôtre Dame, and here gazed in silence, that highest form of homage and admiration. We had nothing but moonlight to help us, but all the details stood out distinctly, bringing up the wonderful west front, the delicate flying buttresses of the east end, the great rose windows, with a clearness you would have supposed impossible. Anything more refined and beautiful could not be imagined ; and one thought of Ruskin, who raves about it, and of Victor Hugo who made so much of it, and above all of the brain that designed it and the hands that raised it to perfection.

Beside it flowed the dark Seine, its impenetrable waters gloomy and mysterious under the night sky. With this, thoughts and associations were more melancholy. Not far off was that terrible Morgue ; and all the unhappy victims of the river that have been carried there would unfold a tale of horror greater than the world could hold.

Whilst looking over into the cold flowing waters we were suddenly accosted by a madman, who danced before us in a sort of fine phrenzy, and shouted as we moved away rather abruptly, lest the desire should seize him to hurl us over the parapet. H. C., strong and muscular, might have grappled with such a foe, but my frail tenement would have as much chance in the grasp of insanity as a pigmy in the hands of a giant.

Fortunately the trial did not take place. We went our way, the madman went his; or rather we left him on the bridge. It was the Pont St. Michel which I have crossed scores of times on my way to the Quartier Latin, to take part in scenes I can contemplate without any terrible self-accusings, yet in which ladies, nevertheless, had no place. We left the madman, I say, grinning after us like an embodied imp, and showing teeth that to our excited imagination looked like fangs seeking whom they might devour. No doubt he was harmless, and the chances are that he will some day take a leap into the pitiless stream which even then he seemed to be scrutinising with evil intent.

After this we made our way down the banks of the Seine, through the courtyard of the Louvre, back to the hotel, where I was undergoing a small adventure. It was in this wise.

On first arriving, we had left the care of the luggage to the porters of the hotel, but when it was taken up to our rooms a dressing-bag was missing. It appeared to have been overlooked and sent back in the voiture, luckily one belonging specially to the Gare du Nord. The bag also contained important documents not to be replaced, and one felt somewhat anxious. I stirred up the people in the bureau, who are naturally lethargic, and take things with an amazing calmness. They in turn abused the porters, and one of the two special culprits in agony of mind and repentance, went off to the Gare du Nord in a fiacre. He returned with the information that the bag had been found by the inspector and immediately despatched back again to the hotel. Time passed, but no bag appeared, and at half-past nine a second messenger was sent off. He likewise returned about eleven with the information that this particular bag had been confounded with another bag, that it was now at the station in possession of the Commissaire de Police, and could not and would not be delivered before to-morrow morning.

As our train started at 8.45, it was evident that the powers must be moved, a difficult thing to accomplish in France. Though nearly midnight, I went off to the Gare, found the Commissaire on the very point of leaving, praised his discretion, admired his organising faculties, and, in short, managed so well as to retire in possession of my property—and of the heart of Monsieur le Commissaire.

Then it turned out that I, and I alone, had been the culprit. Carrying my own bag by way of additional caution, on coming out of the station I had placed it for a moment on one of the benches, whilst a porter went off in search of our special carriage. Up came our late fellow traveller, his two dogs pulling two ways and he pulling a third. He at once started a lively conversation, and when the carriage was found, the bag was forgotten. There it was discovered by a porter when the crowd had cleared away and the station was deserted, and taken to the office of the Commissaire de Police.

But what about the unhappy hotel porters, who, for four hours,

abused by the bureau, had been trembling in their shoes, wondering how it would all end for them? Two had been held responsible, and the only thing to be done was to award them substantial damages without the intervention of the Court. This was not a difficult matter, and I am persuaded that they have ever since been on the look out for a similar adventure.

The next morning we left for Bordeaux, crossing the Seine and passing down by the Jardin des Plantes on the way to the Gare d'Orléans. We caught a passing view of Nôtre Dame, but beautiful as it was, the sentiment and poetry of last night's moonlight was now missing. We were also a little anxious about our train, which we caught only just in time.

There were two people in our carriage, evidently husband and wife, curious specimens of the sunny south: dark, swarthy, clumsy members of society, who spoke with a strong Provençal accent. When the guard came up and asked Monsieur where he was bound for, he replied, in a rich, rolling guttural: "Bourdeaux," pronouncing it as it was anciently spelt, and may still be found. About eleven o'clock this interesting couple spread out a sumptuous repast, including two bottles of wine and a *dessert*. This occupied them for half an hour, when the gentleman rolled himself up like a marmoset and went to sleep, and Madame, removing her gloves, contemplated her jewelled hands and fell into deep thought.

It was a very interesting journey, and one that I think you do not chance to have taken. We passed many well-known towns and many churches and cathedrals conspicuous for their fine architecture and magnificent sites. At Orléans we stayed twenty-five minutes for déjeuner, and fell to musing upon Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel. Tours, where the purest French is spoken, looked calm and white and pastoral. Its fine cathedral rose above the town, which spreads far and wide, many red-roofed houses standing out in vivid contrast with the green fields and long, straight avenues of the plain. Flowing through it was the beautiful Loire, adding poetry and motion to the scene. About Poitiers the terraced rocks were magnificent, and the situation of the place was wonderfully romantic and picturesque. The broad river still ran its course, above which the rocks rose in singular flutings, bare and rugged, like castled ruins of a far gone age. Vivonne, with its lovely old church, surrounded by quaint village houses, was sleeping in its sunny plain; and St. Benoît, with its sluices and river and wooded slopes, looked like a dream as we flew past it.

We were soon in the heart of the wine district. Mile after mile of vineyard stretched before us. But the fruit had all been gathered, and the bare vines looked anything but luxuriant and romantic, anything but emblematical of the sunny south.

Nor were we as yet in warm climes. A cold wind blew in upon us, which caused Madame to put up the collar of her jacket and twist a fur round her neck, and look reproachfully at us; and

Monsieur shivered in his sleep and dreamed of arctic regions, and sneezed seven successive times without waking. But what would you? We had closed the window to within a couple of inches, and even this at great sacrifice. You know these people of the sunny south, and how the scent of garlic inevitably accompanies them as perfume follows the rose (one likes to go to extremes in comparisons); and our travellers were no exception to this rule, which really seems in these lands to be the one rule without it. So the open window remained open, and presently Madame subsided from the contemplative mood into the oblivious; and the train and the day rolled on to evening.

At a quarter to six we reached Bordeaux. Before the train had



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stopped, Madame screamed out for "un petit omnibus," and we soon found that she was a cunning traveller. Everyone seemed to ask for "un petit omnibus," and we who took things more leisurely discovered, when our time came, that all the small omnibuses were engaged, and were driving off one after another like a string of turkeys. There remained nothing but an omnibus that would have held comfortably twenty-four people, with a great mirror at one end drawing them out to forty-eight, and making the lumbering vehicle look really cavernous. Into this we two were politely shown, felt lost, and wondered if we should ever find our way out again.

It rattled off; and you know how French omnibuses *can* rattle, and at what a pace they tear when it suits their purpose to put on steam. To-night we rattled and tore with a vengeance, and all our traps were soon lying like fallen images on the floor, my

precious bag amongst them. It was quite dark, and our first impression of Bordeaux was that of rolling over a fine bridge, and a river of amazing width, and a port apparently of endless resources and anchorage. Church towers and steeples uprose here and there, and an old gateway—La Porte du Palais—called out all H. C.'s enthusiasm, though we could see nothing but outlines exaggerated against the dark night sky. But he was right, for the next day it proved ancient and interesting.

We soon found ourselves at the Hôtel de France, and were not refused admission to the table d'hôte, where, amongst other courses, we were treated to boiled mutton and caper sauce, called in the menu, *Gigot à l'Anglaise*: reminding one of the menu at the Cliftonville Hotel at Margate, where I had recently spent some time. The first day, one of the items was *Curry à l'Indienne*, and we wondered what curry *not à l'Indienne* could be. The second day the self same dish was entered *Karri à la sauce piquante*. Both were simply curried mutton.

The next morning I had one of my headaches, which you know have been my perpetual torment and torture; but which, thanks to Dr. Frazer of Bournemouth, who must be a wizard in his profession, have become very nearly things of the past with me. By ten o'clock it had taken flight, and we went forth to examine Bordeaux by daylight.

We had done so the previous night, and under gaslight it looked an imposing, well built town, with shops that rivalled those of Paris. One jeweller had an especial display of gems, and it took all my powers of persuasion to prevent H. C. from entering and rashly buying a pair of solitaire diamond earrings marked at the modest price of 5,000 francs. I tried my hardest to find out who they were destined for, but the Oracle was discreet and dumb.

By daylight Bordeaux was equally imposing. Nearly all the shops were open until twelve, and then closed, as it was Sunday. The general impression of the town is exceedingly good; but a far inferior town would be made conspicuous and interesting by its noble river and port, and the fine bridges spanning the water. The cathedral has a splendid exterior, but the west façade was never finished; and the detached belfry at the east end, a lovely Gothic tower, is crowned by an ugly gilt image of the Virgin—though the church is dedicated to St. André. This tower once had a spire 100 feet high, but it was destroyed during the Reign of Terror.

If the interior can be considered fine, it consists in being a nave spanned by a single vault of great width, resting on Romanesque arches, with two tiers of Romanesque windows on either side. This single span gives it dignity, and makes it somewhat imposing; but with this exception, the general effect is not by any means striking.

More remarkable in some ways was the church of St. Michel which also has a very fine detached Gothic belfry, but whose exterior

is in all other respects not worthy of comparison with the mother church. It is in the florid 14th and 15th century style. We liked the pointed arches and naves of the interior, and were simply charmed with the magnificent tones of the great organ. Service was going on, and the boys' voices in the distant chancel rose and fell in Gregorian chant. When they ceased the organ swelled out, now softly as a whispered melody, now crashing out in a perfect volume of sound that rolled and reverberated through the aisles and seemed to shake them to their very foundations. I have seldom heard anything finer and more thrilling, and more than ever felt that music is Heaven's divinest gift to man.

Before this, in the morning, we had strolled through the market place, and though it seems rather like descending from the sublime to the ridiculous, I think we enjoyed it as much as anything. Here, far more than in the atmosphere, which to-day was chilly, we realised that we were entering southern latitudes. Though it was Sunday morning, the market was in full activity, the stalls were most picturesque. The women asked a franc, and would probably have taken ten sous, for immense bouquets of roses that almost required a wheelbarrow to convey them home. There were stores of tomatoes at a penny a pound, and baskets of strawberries at a shilling, and luscious green figs that were almost given away, whilst everything else seemed in proportion.

One woman, whether we would or not, thrust upon us six bunches of the largest, sweetest violets you ever saw, and demanded two sous for them. We almost felt that we were robbing her. I tried to get a box to hold a supply that would have adorned and scented your rooms, but twelve had struck, and at the magic sound all shops close, swift as the ghosts that disappear at cockcrow. So you never had your violets; and here in Palma, amidst perpetual sunshine and eternal summer, and much that is lovely and charming, they have yet to be discovered.

We left Bordeaux at 7.15 in the evening, en route for Barcelona, wondering very much what sort of a night journey lay before us. Luckily we had a carriage to ourselves, and the guard, who paid us special attention, marked our compartment with a white cross. For a moment we felt almost under a ban, cut off from mankind like the lazarettos of old tenanted by infected mortals, or the doomed houses that were marked during the raging of the plague. But the white cross in our case was as the swan to Lohengrin; a token that we dwelt in the odour of sanctity and were unapproachable.

Outside, the night was still, chilly and mysterious. No brilliant stars, no silvery moon, but heavy clouds and occasional showers. Towns and churches, when we came to them, threw out dark outlines. Deep silence seemed to reign everywhere except in the stations.

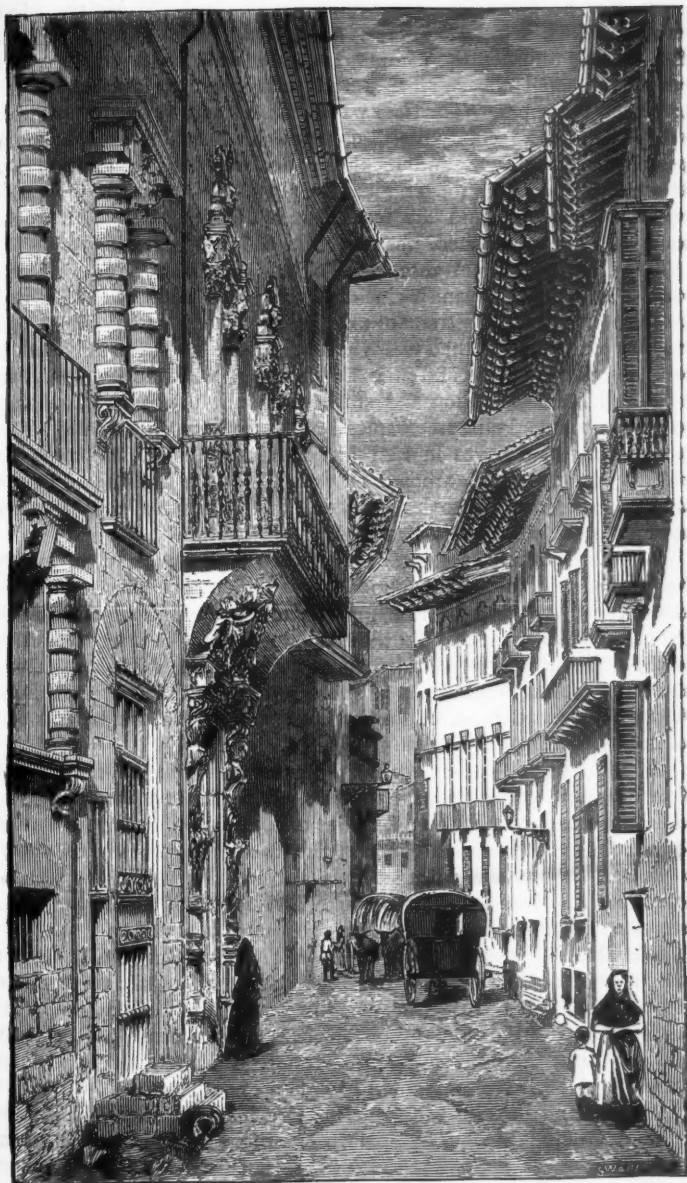
At Narbonne, at one in the morning, human nature imperatively demanded support, and we crossed over to the deserted buffet and surprised the sleepy waiter by an order for coffee and cold chicken. The former he served in glasses like a mazagran, and we took it all standing. The famous Narbonne honey was conspicuous by its absence, and on asking an explanation of the *garçon*, he gave a reply which might be broadly interpreted by the old and homely saying that no one is so badly shod as the shoemaker's wife. In the hurry of the moment, I left my coffee behind untouched, and still look back with agony of mind upon the forgotten glass. Do you know the sensation that one o'clock in the morning creates on such occasions? How very *mortal* we feel; a state of bondage that nothing relieves like coffee.

On the platform we found a distressed old lady who had been rash enough to descend from her compartment and could not find it again. It is rather a terrible feeling, with the train on the point of starting, and it is often almost impossible to recover your proper place. To begin with, the carriages are quite up in the air, and you have to swing up about six feet from the platform before you can gain a difficult and momentary glimpse of any interior. Then nine times out of ten the blinds are down and the lamps shaded, and you cannot see in at all. This old lady, when the train was in motion, was finally precipitated like a bombshell into the next compartment to ours, containing four smokers, where she must have been as welcome as snow in harvest, and felt herself as much out of place as a swan on land. Not that there was anything swan-like about her, or anything just then very dove-like in the moods of her gallant companions. But the next station restored her to freedom, and no doubt harmony to the invaded.

We reached Cerbère, the frontier town, and were amongst the Pyrenees, with all their beautiful forms and undulations. The comfort of our journey was over. Here we changed carriages, and all luggage was examined. It was three o'clock in the morning, and rain was coming down like waterspouts. This, I assure you, is no exaggeration. I would not for a moment take pattern by H., who writes us word from India that they have blackbeetles as large as kittens, fleas like grasshoppers, and a clap of thunder lasting fifty-nine minutes. We were simply drenched in going from one platform to another, and what made it worse, I had now said with Byron: "My native land, good-night!" to find myself in the midst of an unknown tongue.

Luggage was duly scrutinised, coffee was administered, and not forgotten; we asked by signs and paid by signs, all as intelligible as language, but humiliating. Then we went off to secure seats in, we devoutly hoped, an empty compartment.

The train, however, seemed crowded, and the guard was rude and unamiable. He showed us to a long carriage overflowing with noisy



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Spaniards, all smoking. We protested; he shrugged his shoulders and departed. We followed; he glared. We abused him in English; he returned the compliment in Spanish. Our language was refined and well chosen; his, we felt convinced by the sound, was extremely improper. The train was about to start; we would not yield. We pointed to an empty carriage, to which he had refused a dozen passengers admittance, and recklessly declared for that or nothing. It was a case of the stronger will. We conquered, secured a compartment to ourselves, and the remainder of the journey, which would have been most wretched, was passed in comparative comfort.

Day broke, the sun rose, and clouds dispersed. The scenery was already very Spanish in character; the country fertile and picturesque. Whole districts of olive trees, with their sober green, and curious old trunks clothed plains and hill sides. The cactus abounded, with its prickly fruit, and woe be unto him who plucks it with an ungloved hand. A thousand small darts will pierce him, and they are poisonous. Palm trees spread their feathery crowns, and dates hung below the leaves in rich bronze clusters. Indian corn was ripening on many a flat-roofed tenement. White houses with open upper stories and balconies recalled Eastern visions, and many a town at which we stopped had an Eastern look.

None was more picturesque than Gerona. Its ancient, apparently half-ruined Gothic church, founded by Charlemagne, stood nobly on the brow of the hill, overlooking the town reposing on the slopes. Houses and church looked a thousand years old. A river ran below, and the picturesque wooden balconies no house was without overhanging the water and saw themselves repeated in clearest reflections. Brilliant flowers decorated most of the houses: and where are blooms and blossoms more gorgeous than in Spain?

About half-past-ten our railway journey came to an end. The fine hills and rocks about Barcelona, chocolate and warm and exquisite in tone, opened up; factories and chimneys outside the town did their best to remind one that this is the Manchester of Spain; a distant view of the sea, that it is also its Liverpool; but a Manchester and Liverpool where smoke and fogs are unknown, where sunshine abounds; and balmy airs rob winter of its sting.

We were to "descend" at the Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones, a magnificent name to which the hotel hardly responds, though it is a good one, and the commissionaire on the platform at once took us in charge. I do not mean this in the legal sense of the term. To our great comfort, we found that a boat started for Palma that very afternoon. Nothing could have happened better.

The commissionaire took our luggage in hand, which had to be examined here again. The Spanish seem to delight in this examination, for it takes place ten times where once would suffice. If you go for an hour's drive outside Palma, your vehicle is stopped and searched on returning. It reminds me very much of the French

octrois of our childhood, when our carriage would be so often stopped on returning into the towns, whilst the fierce mien of the uniformed official would strike terror to our young minds lest our chocolates and bonbons should be confiscated.

We were soon packed inside the hotel omnibus, and some of the streets we rattled through were so narrow that we literally sometimes grazed the houses on each side. Barcelona was very Spanish in appearance: a singular remark, you will say, of a Spanish town. Many of the thoroughfares were very picturesque from a certain ancient, dilapidated, poverty-stricken aspect. The wider thoroughfares, like the Rambla, were crowded with hurrying people. It was mid-day, and, one saw at once from the general activity of the place that Barcelona was given up to busy ways, and that grass did not grow in her streets.

The omnibus having swirled round half a dozen times until we were giddy and stupid, finally deposited us at the hotel. The day was very bright, and the streets were hot and blazing. In England you would probably have been glad of some of our superfluous heat, for you were all suffering very much from "indoor" weather, and a series of depressions, of course prophesied from America.

Our stay in Barcelona was a short one, and I shall tell you very little about it. At any time I think two days would be enough to devote to its attractions, though there are some fine excursions to be done in the neighbourhood. We thought it hot and relaxing, and not very healthy, all of which I believe to be a fact. There are many quaint and curious bits about; some good old architecture, but very little to remind you of the rule of the Moor in Spain.

No doubt the glory of Barcelona is its cathedral, with which you would have been wonderfully impressed, as we were. It is Gothic, with a west end that, like that of Bordeaux, has never been finished. The exterior, though possessing some rich ornamentation, is not particularly striking, but the interior at once fills you with a certain solemn awe and admiration. It is cruciform, and divided into three lofty and imposing naves. A dim religious light throws over the whole building a sense of mystery. Massive pillars rise to a great height, but gain a certain grace and lightness from the slender shafts they support. The capitals are richly ornamented, and hold the arches that form the vaulted roof. The whole interior is of splendid proportions, of great height and width. In the obscurity one almost loses the lofty roof, upheld by its chaste and beautiful piers. The octagon at the west end is a dream of loveliness and refinement. To gaze upon it from the far side of the choir, between the fluted pillars; to trace curves and arches and all the wonderful details interlining and dovetailing; to catch it in the light and shade thrown by the white glass and the coloured rays of the stained windows: is to lose oneself in a vision that is almost unearthly. The tone of the interior is marvellous; refined and mellowed and sub-

duced beyond any power of description. Ancient and exquisite windows dye the pillars and the walls and the pavement with rays and colours that might rest on an angel's wing. The obscurity appeals most strongly to the imagination, and rouses the religious fervour of this impressionable people. How different these southern influences from those one encounters under Northern skies! By what widely separate roads these opposite races travel Heavenwards! The effect of the whole is one of the utmost dignity and simplicity, inspiring the most frivolous with a certain religious sentiment. I have seldom been more impressed by any building, and H. C., who is so much at home in all these matters, shared the feeling. It was, singularly enough, first designed by a Majorcan.

The cloisters are worthy of the cathedral. They are small but of exquisite Gothic architecture. An ancient fountain for ever plashes its cool waters in one corner of the court, overshadowed by the pointed arches of a Gothic canopy. Beyond this, in the open space, orange and other trees spread their branches, and fleck the sunny pavement with dancing shadows, and give you upward glimpses of a sky bluer than we dream of in England: a sky that seems merely the slight covering or outer veil of celestial regions. We stayed, wrapped in dreams and visions, until the very last moment of our time, and then made the best of our way to the Majorcan boat.

The magnificent port was crowded with shipping. We had to take a small boat to our little steamer lying in the middle of the harbour. She proved very comfortable as far as cabins and arrangements were concerned, but a terrible roller.

We started at four o'clock, with more people than we had expected. The passage out of the harbour was very grand, toned by a descending sun, a sky red and glowing, and gorgeous clouds that sailed onwards. Windows on shore caught up the red flush. An immense rock, like a second Gibraltar, stood out boldly, and seemed to guard the entrance. Low lying, undulating hills beyond, stretched downwards, veiled in the loveliest purple hues. A cormorant here and there skimmed the wide waste of waters, hieing home on the strong wings of its race.

Once free of the harbour, and out on the broad main, the boat began to show the stuff she was made of. One trembled for what she might do on a rough sea. H. C., with the most innocent air in the world, proposed an early dinner, and afterwards declared his intention of remaining on deck all night. By that time a very unpleasant motion had set up. Many had fallen victims, and H. C. did not escape. I turned in early, and was only disturbed during the night by an occasional sea striking the vessel, and sending a shiver through it that uncomfortably suggested a possible dissolution of the craft. H. C. braved the deck until midnight, then wisely changed his mind, and turned in also.

About six o'clock the next morning, we came up with the long,

low, picturesque shores of Majorca. The approach to the port was very fine. The town was backed by splendid hills, some flowing and undulating, others sharp in outline. On a lower range reposed a dignified castle, and below this, on green slopes, a cluster of houses that looked dazzlingly white in the morning sunshine. Here people take refuge during the summer.

We rounded the point, and steamed upwards into the harbour. The cathedral, almost overlooking the sea, stood out boldly—a very remarkable object. A first view of Palma gave one a decidedly Eastern impression. White houses with flat roofs, many of them crowned by great cages for pigeons, stretched far and near. A Gothic, castellated building on the port almost rivalled the cathedral in interest. This proved to be the ancient Exchange, long since fallen into disuse. It was a most picturesque scene; bright, sunny, full of charm, and apparently full of promise. The harbour was crowded with shipping; the quays were full of liveliness and work. Wonderfully bright and blue was the sky, rivalling the blue waters of the Mediterranean, over which we were gliding. Before long, the steamer was at anchor, and we set foot in Palma.

But my letter has drawn out to impossible length, and I must end for to-night. I will only add that of the enclosed sketches, one is a slight drawing of a bit of Barcelona Cathedral, which does it infinite injustice. The other three are H. C.'s, whose fine touch and splendid talent I greatly envy. Two of them are views of wonderfully picturesque courts with which Palma simply abounds; the other is a view of a street, and will give you some idea of the richness of detail of some of these singular and romantic thoroughfares.

They have a curious custom all over Majorca. A watchman patrols the town through the night, crying out, in tones that would drive a melancholy man mad, and a merry one gloomy: "Thanks be to God, the town is in peace, and the night is fine:" varied by: "It is half past one in the morning and the night is serene," or words to that effect. Amongst the people he is known as *Il Sereno*; a very pretty title; because in this favoured clime he has more often than not to proclaim the night *serene*. He perambulates with a lantern, like another Diogenes. In spite of his melancholy tones, one likes to listen to him. It is the old custom, slightly varied, of "Watchman, what of the night?" As I write, I hear him, and he reminds me that it is—not late, but early. So I will end by wafting you a far off benediction.—May all good angels have you in their holy keeping!

A RENUNCIATION.

TURN from me thy sweet face !
 Give thou its radiance to some other one
 To whom thou shalt be as the gleam of day,
 Or as the healing glory of the sun,
 To scatter all the gloom of night away !
 Turn those dear eyes of mercy far from me,
 For all unworthy is my soul of thee !
 Turn from me thy sweet face !

Nay, hush thy pleading voice !
 It smites my stricken soul, as if from Heaven
 There fell the music of the cherubim
 Upon some lonely one, from whom is riven
 The hope of ever joining in that hymn
 Whose melody no touch of sorrow knows,
 But sweetens all the spheres through which it flows !
 Oh, hush thy pleading voice !

Thy garments all are white !
 Ere yet we part may I but kiss the hem,
 And, looking yet again on thy sweet face,
 Pray that the virtue that shall heal from them
 May flow, to give my darkened life a grace ;
 So that if e'er I to thy glory come,
 I may not stand by thee in sorrow dumb !
 Thy garments all are white !

May I but kiss thy feet
 Ere yet we enter on our ways apart ?
 The one to lead me to the falling night,
 Where thy pure tears shall never touch my heart :
 The other guiding thy sure steps to light !
 I dare not look upon thy shining face,
 But for one solemn, heavenly moment's space,
 Oh, let me kiss thy feet !

Stay, do I feel thy kiss
 Upon my neck, as low I lie in dust ?
 And has that wondrous love of thine stepped down
 From its high eminence, to give the trust
 That yet may add new lustre to thy crown ?
 And shall our feet, with thy great love new shod,
 Walk yet together on our way to God,
 Through thy forgiving kiss ?

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

THE ROBBERS' CAVE.

BY ANNE BEALE.

IF Wales is a country rich in stories of ghosts, fairies, and "Romantic weddings," it is also not deficient in tales of wreckers, robbers, smugglers, and similar disturbers of the public peace. Amongst others committed to our keeping by the departed friend who implicitly believed in them all, is one dating back to the time of Queen Elizabeth, which tells of a band of robbers that infested the woods and the rock-bound coast round about the part where her own haunted mansion lay.

The scene was a grand and castellated residence, with its chapel, situated at the top of a valley two miles in length, which sloped gradually and reposefully to the wild, restless sea. It was met by two small but dangerous bays that lay between jutting rocks, and into which the tides rushed, and from which they receded so rapidly and fiercely that the peasantry were wont to call the projecting rocks "The opening and closing of the Points."

Although six miles of smooth sand lay on either side of these bays, the treacherous sea gave small time to the wanderer to pass the Points when it had receded from them, but was ready to engulf him if he was not alive to the seasons, at which he could hurry past them with safety. Moreover, there were quicksands hard by, even more pitiless than the sea itself.

These quicksands were at the base of one of two mountains which rose on either side of the valley, and looked down protectingly on the mansion, which seemed, indeed, but a pigmy between them. At the distance of about half a mile from this mansion was an immense inland cave, which, in the Middle Ages, was taken possession of by a band of robbers. Unlike the renowned Robin Hood, they had not even a robber's conscience, but oppressed the weak as well as the strong, the poor as well as the rich, and were the terror of that part of South Wales in which their cave was situated.

It was night, or more properly, early morning. In the glen leading from the mansion, neighbour of the cave, a figure was seen hurrying down the greensward. Was it a ghost? It might be, for it looked all white beneath the fitful moon. But if a ghost, why pause and glance round, then hurry on again? It stayed its steps before one of the haunted towers, as if about to enter; but the gate was barred, and it hurried on. It was no ghost, but a woman, who carried something huddled up in her arms, and who must have left her bed to flee in haste, since she was clad only in her night-gear, with some sort of loose robe thrown over it. Her feet were bare, her hair

floated about her, and she seemed in some awful strait. She shook the gate of the second tower, but that, too, was shut—barred against the robbers.

On she sped till she reached the haunted field. She shrieked with terror, expecting to be assailed by all sorts of invisible enemies. But there was not even a jack-o'-lantern to mislead her; so she rushed through it till she found herself close upon the shore.

She paused and muttered in breathless excitement, "Thank God, it is out! The Points are unclosed."

She meant the tide and the two projecting rocks. She was on the sands quick as an arrow from a bow. They were smooth yellow sands; so, happily, the bare feet did not suffer. Could she get past the Points before the yawning, greedy sea rushed into the bay? The tide was creeping up like some beast of prey in ambush, and might in a moment leap forward with a bound, and seize on her and her burden. She gazed on it, hesitated, and rushed on. She rounded one of the points, and suddenly the roar of the wild monster increased in volume, and she stood a second, paralyzed with terror. Only a second, for she darted onwards to the other Point, and reached it just as the insatiable tide leapt in fury into the bay. She escaped its jaws as if by a miracle, and ran up the beach, pursued by the angry waters.

Out of their reach at last, she sat down on a big boulder. The moon shone out and revealed a face pale as its own.

"They will see me!" she cried, glancing within the loose cloak, and hastening on again. "Better the tide! better the tide!" she added, as she looked at the rolling ocean.

It was rolling ominously towards her, when, with a bound, she leapt from a heap of pebbles at the top of the beach into a green dell, similar to the valley of spirits she had left behind, but smaller. Her poor feet were bleeding now, and her strength was well nigh spent. She had traversed three or four miles of greensward and sand, and her breath came heavily, her footsteps lagged. With a supernatural effort, however, she ran up the dell, glancing behind her as if pursued. Turning off to the right, she followed a path among the rocks, heedless of the stones and brushwood that pierced her feet and tore her garments.

"At last, thank God!" she cried, as the moon suddenly veiled her face, and she sank down exhausted. "Help! help!" she shrieked, and with her call mingled the shrill cry of an infant.

"Who's there?" echoed through the darkness, followed by a gleam of light that seemed supernatural. The lusty baby-cry was the only answer. Nevertheless it attracted the ignis fatuus of a light, which vanished from above and reappeared below. Again the moon shone out and revealed a scene as picturesque as it was startling. The woman lay, seemingly dead, beneath the porch of a small dwelling, at which suddenly appeared the figures of a man and woman.

Within a stone's throw of this abode was a church with ivy-mantled tower; and church and house were surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills. The figures that bent over the prostrate woman looked almost as ghostly as she did, and were as lightly clad. But they proved themselves of flesh and blood; for they dragged her into the house. So doing the burden fell from beneath the cloak. It proved to be an infant, and the lusty cry was renewed.

Woman and child were soon within a small parlour, and the pair who brought them there looked for a moment aghast at one another. They were, as transpired immediately, master and servant.

"Sure, sir, it's Mrs. Lewis, head nurse at the Plâs!" exclaimed the maid.

"Take the babe, Betto, while I carry her up to my bed, that's warm, for haven't I just left it?" replied the master.

No sooner said than done.

"Hide us! Save us! They have murdered them all," cried our wanderer, awakening from her swoon. "Where's my baby? Have they killed him too?"

The lusty cry reassured her, and she opened her arms.

"He's well enough, Mrs. Lewis, fack," said Betto, placing him within them.

"Betto! Parson! they've murdered them all," said the nurse, glancing round with a bewildered stare.

"They? Who?" asked the Parson, for it was the Reverend David Saunders, of Llanwerne.

"The robbers. I saw them with their swords in the mistress's room, and heard the children cry for mercy, and then I took up this precious babe and ran for my life. You must hide us, for they'll be after us as soon as they find we've escaped."

"Feed them; clothe them, Betto, while I dress myself. Put the infant to bed, and then bring Mistress Lewis down to the sitting-room. No more sleep to-night," said his reverence, leaving his room to the women.

Shortly afterwards he was kindling a fire in his tiny parlour, and muttering short prayers and ejaculations as he did so. "The country will be depopulated—Lord have mercy upon us! If the woman's tale be true, it is a case like that of Joash, saved by Jehosheba from that robber-woman Athaliah. The father so lately dead—To slay the widow and children—Impossible! Even bold marauders should have hearts. The Lord preserve us."

The nurse appeared attired in Betto's sunday linsey. She had left the babe asleep. She gave a coherent account of what had happened, which the parson heard with uplifted hands. The robbers had broken into the mansion, and murdered, she believed, every soul within it, except herself and the babe.

"Where's the Captain?" asked Mr. Saunders, in a low, warning voice.

"Nobody knows," replied the nurse; "but he's the next o' kin, and they do say he fears neither God nor man. I believe he's leagued with the robbers."

The Captain was the brother of the late owner of Plâs Werne, and would inherit the property under the present sad circumstances.

"Neither he nor the robbers must know that you have escaped with the infant, or you'll be murdered too," said the Parson. "Where can you hide? I have it. In the church tower."

"It's haunted," shrieked the nurse.

"So much the better. Nobody will molest you. That room was built, so they say, to hold a hundred men or more from their enemies, and should serve to hide a woman and a babe. They'll take you for the ghost, and not a soul will go nearer the tower than the chancel. But you must stay here while I see what's to be done. Betto! Betto! Take care of Dinah Lewis and the babe."

"They'd better be hiding in bed than up, master," answered Betto, reappearing.

The Reverend David Saunders went out, leaving the woman quailing with fright, but this time it was rather of ghosts than robbers. He found the moon gone off on her rounds, and the sun about to take her place. A crimson glow was colouring the watery mountain mists, and streaks of dawn were laying their light fingers on the hill-tops. He hastened through his garden and across a green lane to his church, and stood a moment contemplating it. He knew that neither robber nor Lord of the Manor suspected the room in the tower, and even if they did, they could scarcely approach it, since it could only be entered on hands and knees. Fortunately his small parish of half a dozen collected and as many scattered houses, was at a distance; and save on Sunday his flock rather avoided than frequented the neighbourhood of the church. He was aware that they affirmed to have seen wonderful sights in the churchyard, and he knew that it was useless to combat their superstition; so he contented himself with writing a book on the antiquity of the sacred edifice, which he proved to have been built long before the time of Julius Cæsar. Moreover, he was proud to tell how the old cross in the graveyard had been used for nailing up wolves' heads; for each of which the fortunate slayer had been duly paid after morning service. Indeed, he would fain have declared the church pre-Adamite, like the cave, if he could; but the deluge and other unforeseen circumstances came in his way.

Church, tower, cross and mouldering monuments looked spectral enough for anything, in the misty, purply dawn, and nobody but the Parson would have ventured to unlock the heavy door and enter at that ghostly hour. At no hour would the boldest of his people have climbed the tower staircase, as he did, in the dark, and fumbled about on its crumbling summit till he found some sort of hole, into which he crawled. He usually brought a lantern with him when he

mounted to this his observatory, as he called it, but on the present occasion he had been oblivious of all but the refugees.

However, he got safely into a spacious room, lighted by a good-sized tower-window, and stood in the centre, looking about him. "If hundreds of fugitives have taken refuge here, why not a woman and a babe?" he thought, as the rosy dawn looked in through the arched window, and lighted up a trestle-bed, a chair or two, and a table. "They will be safe nowhere else till we get them beyond seas. The robbers are ubiquitous." He looked out of the window on a glorious prospect of mountain-tops now clearing from mists, and a sky all crimson, purple and golden. "What could anyone want more? It is summer, fortunately, and I can feed them. They shall lack nothing. Old Jonas, sexton, and Joshua, clerk, will say there is another ghost if they hear the infant."

All that day there was such a coming and going at the little parsonage that all that was thought of was how to conceal the poor little heir of Plás Werne. The countryside was all astir, and little work was done that day. The peasantry spoke with bated breath, and the Parson had as much as he could do to listen. Everybody was in terror of his life, and no one was powerful enough to make head against the freebooters. Indeed, no one ever came across them. At Plás Werne, on the previous evening, there had been only women and children, for Ap Madoc was dead, and his widow and family lived there, with their servants; and where, it was asked, were the men? In league with the robbers, it was suggested, since only one grey-headed old butler was found among the murdered. The house had been rifled, and there was no one left to say how it had happened. Of all the crimes committed by the outlaws, this was the most glaring; and rich and poor were roused—for whose turn might it not be next? Swords and knives were sharpened, guns loaded, and a great show of valour made: but what did the robbers care? They were secure in their numbers and their cave, and defied law and authority.

Our Parson was determined to outwit them. That night, lantern in hand, he carried bedding and clothes to the church, aided by Betto, and dragged it, piecemeal, to the tower. But he had an awful fright. As he was about to re-enter the parsonage, he saw a man not far off, watching him. He was ready-witted, and went up to him.

"There you are, Jonas," he said. "You promised to come and help me face the ghost, and now I have seen it all alone. Not Jonas after all! Good-night, friend."

The watcher might have been the ghost, for he glided off among the mountains. Anyhow he did not know of the secret of the tower chamber, and the Parson thought that the sooner he got his guests into it the better.

This was, indeed, no easy matter. Dinah Lewis declared she would rather be murdered a hundred times over than sleep in that haunted tower, and Mr. Saunders was compelled to assure her that

both she and the child would be murdered, if they remained where they were. How he got them into it, he never knew, but attributed it to a direct interposition of Providence. First he helped Dinah up the tower stairs, more dead than alive, and shoved her through the aperture; then he passed in the infant, and finally entered himself. Ostensibly the sort of half-arched doorway was intended to admit light to the staircase, and was so low that only one person could pass through at a time, and that on hands and knees. As a place of refuge, those within would have been at a great advantage, and might have held their garrison against an army of invaders, thrusting them back down the steps up which they came, till the tower had been heaped with the slain. Tales were told that as many as three hundred fugitives had been together in that secretive apartment: there was, therefore, ample room for the trio who now occupied it.

"You are safe here, Mistress Dinah," said the Parson, as he unveiled his lantern. "Be assured that ghosts don't like mounting such a flight of steps, and you and Master Ap Madoc will have it all to yourselves. I will wait upon you, and if you're afraid o' nights, I'll keep guard in yonder corner."

He had managed, during the day, to bring every article necessary for comfort and food up to the room, and knew that his visits would neither be observed nor interfered with.

"For God's sake, don't go, sir," supplicated Dinah; so he lay down on a rug in the distant corner, and was soon fast asleep. The nurse, reassured by his presence, also lay down on the trestle-bed; and, wearied as she was by the past day and night, followed his example, while the infant slumbered in her arms.

While they thus "slept the sleep of the just," there was high revelry in the Robbers' Cave some five miles off. The freebooters were feasting on the spoils of Plâs Werne, and with them was Captain Ap Madoc, brother of the late lord of the mansion, and now its presumed owner. The country imagined him abroad, while he was in league with demons in human form at home. Wine flowed, and they toasted him as Lord of the Manor, and forgot their crimes in revelry and debauchery. Amongst them were men once reputed gentlemen, who, like himself, had "spent their substance in riotous living," but unlike him, were not about to become masters of ancestral houses. They boasted of the terror they inspired, and recounted their exploits as if they had been doughty deeds of chivalry.

"I misdoubt David Saunders, of Llanwerne," said one. "He prowls about at night."

"Let's have his head," quoth guilty Ap Madoc, draining a glass lately full of his brother's wine.

"I saw him but yesterday, alone in the dark, between his house, and the church," said the first speaker. "He is fearless, and would sell us all to the devil if he had the chance."

"Ha, ha! let's sell him first," laughed Ap Madoc.

The cave was enormous—one of nature's freaks when she heaped mountain on mountain in one of her convulsive throes, and left an arch in their midst. Like the tower, the entrance to it was narrow, though men could walk in and out erect. The inmates were numerous, and all were armed. They were fierce, ill-looking men, to whom robbery and murder were common as their daily bread. No wonder the peaceable inhabitants of the mountainous district, of which the cave seemed the formidable centre, both woke and slept in terror of their lives. To approach the cave, hidden and guarded as it was, was impossible; to eradicate the robbers seemed utterly impracticable. Anyone who saw them in their cave, with their fierce, sullen, diabolical faces, would have endorsed this. But their last awful deed had surpassed its predecessors, and Ap Madoc trembled lest he should be implicated. He was in their power, and he felt that they would as soon murder him as not.

"Are you sure they are all gone?" he asked, somewhat uneasily.

"All! All! Another toast to the heir!" was the reply.

And so the robbers and their guest spent the night in revelry which the infant and his guardian passed in the tower-chamber.

More than this, Ap Madoc took possession of Plâs Werne, while the murderers continued their maraudings, and the lawful heir lay perdu, unconscious of his rights.

Meanwhile, the Reverend David Saunders plotted and planned. Nightly did he or Betto personate the ghost, while the one not so employed, mounted the tower stairs with food for the poor prisoners. Mistress Dinah languished, the babe thrived, and nobody guessed what was passing in the old church tower. But everybody wondered at the unusual activity of the Parson. All day long he was absent from his parish, riding hither and thither, but none knew whither. He was away from early morn till nightfall, and Betto declared herself as lonesome as Dinah.

"I shall not be back to-night, Betto. You must be both porter and ghost," said his reverence, one morning early, as he mounted his horse. "Keep you the white garments on when you carry up the necessaries, and you will be as safe as if you had a regiment of dragoons to guard you. Maybe you will before long."

"Are you thinking I'm made of iron, Master?" asked Betto, trembling at the prospect before her.

"Do the right, and put your faith in God," returned his reverence, riding off.

It must be confessed that Betto, strong-minded as she certainly was, did not like being left alone at night. But she put a brave face upon it, wrapped her sheet carefully about her, and took a jug of hot milk and other food across to the church. The night was cloudy the aisles looked gruesome, and the lantern she had suspended from her neck, threw but a sepulchral light on the scene. Still she

mounted the tower steps, reached the narrow landing, and thrust her victuals through the wall.

"Come you in, for pity's sake. 'T is terrible lonesome," said Dinah from within; and the child began to cry.

Truth to tell, Betto felt lonesome too, so she crept into the room. A weird, shadowy, strange place it seemed to her; for she had never ventured in before.

Mistress Dinah shrieked at the sight of her in her white garments; and it was some time before she could be convinced that she was not her very own ghost.

"I am myself, and not my ghost," she said, partially throwing off her concealing sheet.

While she remained in the tower there were singular goings on at the Vicarage. The robbers had laid their plans for that particular night, and had come to have the Reverend David Saunders's life. A goodly number of them wound through the mountains stealthily, and surrounded his house. Some went in while others mounted guard. The door was unlocked, so there was no difficulty. They went from room to room, examined beds and cupboards, but found no one. "He must have had scent of it; he finds out everything; maybe he is hiding in the church," they said. The whisper went round, and the guard circled the church, instead of the Vicarage. Their forms looked ghostly enough as they wandered round about, and the mountains looked down upon them, like giants upon pigmies. About half a dozen passed through the churchyard to the church. They found the door open, and went in. They were struck with a sort of awe at the dim pillars and arches, and were about to retreat, when they were paralysed at sight of a ghost. It came from the belfry, glided down a side aisle, and passed through the open door. The ghost was Betto. No sooner was she in the churchyard than she saw figures on all sides.

"The robbers, as sure as I'm alive. I'll scare 'em for once," she thought to herself.

Accordingly, she moved slowly through the churchyard, keeping at a respectful distance from her enemies as she did so, and had the satisfaction of seeing them flee from her like a flock of sheep from a wolf. Emboldened by success, she glided through the open gate towards the house, and paused in the middle of the road.

"There's wise, master is!" she reflected. "He do know that there's no such things as ghosts, but do make them of use all the same. There's cowards they are. Afraid of a white sheet, and murdering innocent children."

Shrewd Betto! They feared God in the unseen, but defied Him in the seen. They took to their heels simultaneously, and left her mistress of the field. She was not, however, as bold as she seemed; and when she entered the house and found all there topsy-turvy she bethought her that Dinah and the infant were safer up aloft than she

down below, and actually went back to the church, locked the door, and remounted those weary steps. The women finished the night together.

When the parson returned the following day, he commended Betto, and promised her that she should be rewarded in due time. "But for Providence I should have lost my head," he said; "and but for you my goods and chattels."

He was not quite easy about the said head, and, pending certain negotiations he was making, passed the nights with Mistress Dinah and the babe in the tower. Betto "went along for company," as she expressed it; and the number of the refugees was doubled.

All of a sudden the countryside became alive with excitement and astonishment. Down came the regiment of bold dragoons at which the Parson hinted. It was to stir up magistrates and local magnates—to memorialise the Queen and her Parliament, and to outwit the robbers that he had been absent from his parish so much and so often; but nobody ever knew that he was in the secret of the advent of the military.

If Dinah shook in her shoes up in the tower-chamber, what of the wicked Ap Madoc at Plâs Werne? What of the freebooters? Perhaps the latter felt the most secure, for long success had emboldened them, and they feared neither God nor man. But the dragoons were fierce and resolute as they, and being engaged in a righteous cause, were just as fearless. So was the Reverend David Saunders. He knew the country well, and pioneered the military in somewhat reckless fashion, seeing what depended on his safety of limb and life.

Wild and exciting were the scenes amongst the mountains, and the soldiers declared they were fighting against devils, not men, so miraculous were the appearances and disappearances of the marauders. Indeed they did not originate this idea, for the peasantry believed their lawless deeds to be done by Satanic agency. However, the red-coats harassed them by night and by day, and at last even made their way through rock, brushwood, and all sorts of obstacles, to their redoubted cave. "The prince of the powers of darkness must be in it!" ejaculated the Parson, who was with them in some sort of military disguise; for the cave was empty. "We take possession in the Queen's name," laughed the soldiers, and they were billeted there and round about that night, while his reverence returned to his cure.

And a wild night it proved, for back came the robbers in the dead of it, and those who entered first into their gigantic dwelling were received at the point of the bayonet. Many were massacred before the bulk of the horde knew what was passing. When they found out one of them cried, "Set fire to the cave," but the soldiers were prepared for this emergency. Those that lay in ambush burst out upon the robbers, and a deadly fight ensued. The robbers fought

like demons, but when they found that their enemies had the best of it, they disappeared, leaving their dead behind them.

Disappeared? Where? Nobody knew, but everyone cried: "The Devil is certainly in it."

The following day it was rumoured that Ap Madoc had also disappeared, and that Plás Werne was shut up.

When the Parson recounted these events to Dinah, she was all for taking possession of the usurped domain.

"We shall die up here in the cold, and be eaten up by the rats," she said, despondingly, for summer had fled, and the best part of autumn had followed her. Winter was striding on apace. From the tower windows nothing but browns and greys could be seen, for the purple heather was withered, and the snow had not yet fallen upon its stalks.

"Anyhow, we will risk it. The soldiers will protect us," said his reverence.

And a few nights after, Dinah and the babe came down from the tower, under cover of Betto's ghostly sheet. The Parson kept watch while they slept, and no one disturbed the peace of the small dwelling. But there were fine doings at dawn the next morning. Between church and Vicarage, there shone a grand display of gold and crimson, and the astonished mountains looked down on a troop of dragoons, while the mists hurried off in affright, as if expecting pursuit. The sun was not so timid, and burst from behind a mountain-top, as if resolved to see what was astir.

Out came the Reverend David Saunders, carrying the heir, who crowed with delight at the helmeted array, and stretched out his arms to the gallant colonel. He had learnt to walk and even talk a little up in yonder tower, and seemed none the worse for his imprisonment.

The colonel took him in his arms, while the Parson mounted his horse, ready at hand, and Betto helped Dinah up behind him.

"A fine child, indeed!" exclaimed the Colonel, as Master Ap Madoc stroked his glittering uniform. "We'll see thee righted, my boy."

The Parson and Dinah trotted off first down the mountain road; the dragoons followed. They passed the scattered cottages that comprised the small parish, and the women at their doors exclaimed at the sight:

"Mistress Dinah, Plás Werne, and Parson Saunders!"

"And the heir, Madoc Ap Madoc!" supplemented the Parson.

Dinah did not return by the way she had come, but by the high-road, along which the cavalcade trotted briskly. It was still early when they reached the Plás. They found the lodge deserted, and no one answered to their call for the keeper. Up the long avenue of oaks they rode—a brilliant company. Plás Werne was shuttered and bolted like its lodge. But Dinah knew of a small side entrance that she thought might yield to slight force, and thither she rode with the

Parson. He dismounted and tried the door, which was on the latch. He went in boldly enough but soon retreated, and signalled to the soldiers.

"It is full of men; some asleep, some half awake," he said. "They did not see me, but I'll warrant they are all robbers."

In a few moments a cordon of soldiers was formed round the house, and the child and Dinah placed in the midst of a second cordon. Men and horses remained still as statues. Not a sound, save the twittering of the birds, disturbed the peace of the scene. Suddenly the juvenile Ap Madoc began to cry, and his cry was even more lusty than when he aroused the inmates of the Vicarage. A shutter was partially unclosed, and a face partly visible.

"It is the captain," muttered the Parson and Dinah simultaneously. "And I'm sure he saw the child and me."

The shutter reclosed instantaneously.

"If they attempt to escape it will be down the glen," whispered the Reverend David Saunders.

His words proved oracular, for in a few minutes a band of armed men poured through a side entrance, and rushed down the terraces that surrounded the house, towards the haunted glen.

"Down the back road and you will meet them at the Towers," said the Parson, pointing.

A guard was told off to protect the child, and the Colonel and the rest rode away.

The robbers, with the wicked Captain Ap Madoc in their midst, tore down the glen, pistol in one hand, sword in the other. When they reached the Towers, they shouted, and out poured more robbers secreted there. The cavalry were behind them, and the fugitives shot at them as they fled towards the shore. Down the glen, through the haunted field they ran like fiends, making for the noted Points. "They are open for us; they will close on the soldiers," shouted Ap Madoc.

But on the beach they were brought to bay. It was a fearful scene. Some were killed, some surrendered, others succeeded in reaching the Points. Among the latter was Ap Madoc. But the tide was coming in rapidly, and those yawning jaws, that spared the infant heir, were greedy to devour the usurper. And they did not spare him or those who rushed to their destruction with him. The sea makes quick work of it when it chooses; and no sooner was Ap Madoc round one Point and making for the other, than "they closed" upon him, as the saying was, and the world was well rid of the murderer and his accomplices.

And so the robbers were rooted out, and the youngest born of the race of Ap Madoc came to his own again.

NERO AS A MUSICIAN.

ON the tower of Mæcenæ, when Rome was burning, in the first century of our era, might have been seen a young man, dressed in the costume of a Grecian rhapsodist, reclining on the velvet cushions of a luxurious throne. A garland of olive leaves is round his brow, and he holds a lyre on his knee, as he gazes dreamily on the awful conflagration that rages beneath him. By his side stands a *phonascus*, or "voice-trainer," whose special duty it is to guard the emperor's voice from harm; who sniffs the air to see if a chill is in the sky, and every now and then applies a handkerchief that he holds in his hand to wipe the perspiration from his patron's lips. Not far away, among the attendants at the back, stands the second officer of the royal music, the keeper of the Imperial Lyre, whose task it is to search the marts of Europe and Asia for the best materials for strings, the best wood for frame and sounding-board, and to preserve with the nicest exactitude the royal instrument in tune.

"Terpuus," cries the rhapsodist, turning to the trainer at his side, "is inspiration given by surroundings, or does it come, think you, by chance—sent from Parnassus, whenever the gods have a mind to make men happy? I used to think the latter theory true. But now, nay, for months past, I have altered my belief, and find myself able to conjure up the divine enthusiasm, by wresting circumstances to feed my fancies. Was it for mere caprice that I caused this city to be set ablaze? Nay, do not think so. 'Twas to send surging up in my brain a flood of fine thoughts, which are cheap at the price of twice this devastation. Listen to the song I shall sing you, for I affirm that its sublime inspiration is worth twenty burning Romes."

With that, Nero runs his fingers over his lyre, and bursts into an impassioned rhapsody on the ruin of the city.

When he had ended, and after worlds of compliment from all assembled: "Sire," says his voice-trainer, as if in a very ecstasy of fear, "your voice will suffer if you tax it more. Your assumption of the part of Orestes this morning at the theatre was a great strain upon you, considering the delicate state of your throat at present; and surely you will not, by excess of enthusiasm, impair even in a slight degree that beautiful voice, which all the world delights to hear."

"You are right, Terpuus," replies Nero. "We will give over singing for the afternoon; and but for a brief rehearsal of the part we are to sustain at the banquet this evening, no more will we do for some hours. Let me see; what was the part?—'twas—'twas——"

"Your Majesty has forgotten," replied the trainer. "You yourself

mentioned it a short while ago, but in the inspiration of your rhapsodising it has fled for the moment your memory. This evening the Christians who are charged with setting fire to the city are to be burnt at the banquet in the royal gardens. They are to be bound up in the manner of torches, and set alight—the happy idea of your favourite, Crispinus. You are to play the part of Orpheus in the Infernal regions; they to represent the lost.”

“It all comes back to me, Terpuus,” cried Nero, abstractedly; “and the great aria, ‘Give me back my Eurydice.’ Come, let us go into the palace to practise it, that we may make a proper figure at the banquet.”

And the banquet was held in the gardens of Sallust, and all the nobility of Rome were there. And the tables were laid under the trees, and twinkling lamps were hung above the banqueters. And from one end of the gardens came the roar of rare bands of music, while dancing girls, in the lulls between the courses, came dancing down the piles of tables in troupes, wrapped in thin gauze, and clattering their cracking castanets. Many of them were Spanish girls from Gades, in Spain, who danced in line, rising and falling in waves of tremulous motion. And there were also Syrian dancing girls, who had cymbals which they clashed above their heads. And high among the banqueters sat Nero, every now and then applauding the sallies of the dancers. The toasts were ushered in by torrents of rippling flutes; the flute-players beautiful boys and girls, purchased at high rates in the markets of Gaul and Britain.

And with the clearing of the tables, and the commencement of the second course, which was wine alone, the orgies began in earnest. For now the living torches were lighted, to cast a dreadful glare over the banqueters; and shrieks of agony began to mingle with the roar of the music and the tempest of the dancers’ feet. These torches that were lighted were human beings, wound up in tar and tow, and blazing in iron cradles like so many beacon fires. The idea was the invention of the Emperor’s favourite, Crispinus. The evening’s entertainment is at its height; when Nero reels from his throne, and dressed in the garb and character of Orpheus, takes up his position in front of the blazing pyres, to begin his air: “Come, give me back my Eurydice.”

Loud huzzas interrupt his singing. “How capital is the effect,” cries one courtier. “Life-like reality,” exclaims another. And the music of the gardens, accompanying in wild recitative, continues, while the Emperor re-addresses himself to his fearful rôle.

Louder and louder roars the applause, fiercer and fiercer swells the music, fainter and fainter grow the screams—till at last the torches are burnt out, and the moon and the stars shine down through the trees.

Next day is a gala day for the Emperor’s performance at the theatre. Nero’s favourite parts were Orestes, Canae, Œdipus, and

Hercules Furens. As the "mad Hercules" he particularly excelled, and his vein was pre-eminently that of ecstasy and passion. He had made his début as a singer at Naples in the third year of his reign, and from that day forward persevered in his odd and self-imposed vocation with the varying success which attends all masters of the craft. The story of his début reads like romance, yet every word of it is perfect history.

In order to give pomp and circumstance to the occasion, and probably with a view of stimulating public curiosity, he entered Naples, where the event was to take place, dressed as Apollo, playing his lyre, and surrounded by a chorus of singers and instrumentalists, who chanted hymns and triumphal odes as they rode along. Trains of courtiers and attendants followed. There were a thousand carriages in all. The horses and mules were harnessed with silver, and the drivers and muleteers were clad in the costliest cloth from the looms of Canusium.

For nearly a week, day after day, did Nero sustain various characters at the theatre. The opening day was attended with a remarkable circumstance, which many took for an omen of the gods, angry that the monarch of the world should stoop to such unworthy pursuits. For scarcely had he stepped on the stage to commence the introductory scena of the tragedy, than the shock of an earthquake was felt, the benches began to sway about, and the stage to totter almost to falling. Such, however, was the terror in which the Emperor was held that the frightened audience, eager as they were to escape from the building, chose rather to face the raging of nature than Nero's displeasure, and maintained their seats and their attention as best they might during the whole time the earthquake lasted.

As a conscientious singer and a laborious, painstaking artist, this royal virtuoso seems to have been unrivalled. We read that during a "professional engagement" (if such a term is applicable to his case), even should it last for a week or more, he would sing incessantly, sometimes at two or three performances a day, never allowing his voice a moment's rest. He generally took up his lodging within the precincts of the theatre itself, never leaving it except to visit the public baths, hastening back from thence with all speed to the theatre again, and commonly dining in the middle of the orchestra.

Such diligence did he use to improve his voice that it was his constant habit to sit up with his voice-trainer, Terpuus, night after night till the small hours of the morning, practising his arias and roudades for the following day. He slept with plates of lead on his chest, to correct unsteadiness of breathing, and give him the power of sustaining his notes in equal volume. He would also abstain from food for days together, in order to purify his vocal tone, often denying himself fruit and sweet pastry, of which he was enormously fond, because they were held to be prejudicial to singing.

Not only as a vocalist did he aspire to excel, but as an instrumentalist as well, in which department of the art his endeavours were no less unremitting, and his success, perhaps, more certain. He could play the flute with the best virtuosos of his day, and was no mean performer on the trumpet. He was also a skilful lyre-player, and affected particular dexterity on the Assyrian harp, an instrument difficult to learn, and therefore only cultivated by the best masters of stringed instruments.

His ambition to be regarded as the greatest musical celebrity of his age led him to undertake a "starring" tour through all the cities of Greece, in the course of which he sang at the Olympic and Pythian Games in public competition with all comers, and several times received the prize. The Greeks, being more critical or less timid than his Roman subjects, were not so liberal of their applause as Nero could desire, and to correct their omissions in this particular he devised a *claqueur* system, which may well commend itself to aspirants for theatrical honours at the present day.

It was on a gigantic scale. Five thousand *claqueurs* were stationed in various parts of the theatre, and by many rehearsals were rendered proficient by giving three distinct kinds of applause (which were to chime in at certain parts of the libretto previously marked by the Emperor himself). The first order of applause consisted in isolated shouts of "Bravo," as if proceeding from the spontaneous admiration of separate individuals among the audience. The second order was even more artfully contrived, for it consisted in starting applause, and then as suddenly repressing it, then allowing it to break out anew, but again restraining it; for which purpose certain contingents of *claqueurs* were told off, who were called "the cold water men," whose duty it was to hush by hisses and expostulations the incipient clapping and stamping of their fellows.

This device of Nero's must certainly receive the credit of originality, and went further than anything else towards achieving him his theatrical triumphs; for there were few among the audience who suspected the very hisses of partisanship, and often, in anger at the apparition of the latter, they would take up the applause themselves, when it was the cue of the "cold water men" at once to subside.

The third order of plaudit was the vulgar and ordinary one of indiscriminate and loud applause from all the *claqueurs* alike; but this was not so commonly employed as the other two, being too coarse and patent not to arouse suspicion. Such are some of the stories that have come down to us regarding the Emperor Nero, in his singular and little known rôle of player and musician.

Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it; and had his love of art been mere affectation, it would scarcely have shown in those few terrible moments that precede deliberate death.

He was still singing and acting in the theatres of Greece, when the news reached him of the revolt of the Gallic legions, and of a wide-

spread rebellion in which most of the provincial soldiery were implicated. Reluctantly leaving the Grecian boards, he became an unwilling visitant to Rome, where, instead of putting the city in defence and calling out the levies, he passed his time in examining the construction of some new musical instruments which were submitted to his notice, that were called "Water Organs," and were intended as agreeable additions to the stock orchestra of the royal theatre.

Two or three days wasted in this manner allowed the rebellious forces to approach so near to Rome that all chance of averting destruction seemed well nigh hopeless. Energetic measures even at this pinch might have staved off final ruin, but Nero's projected coup-de-main was of so singular a nature that even his friends could ill contain their ridicule. He gathered together all the singers and dancers from the theatres, had them dressed like Amazons, and placing himself at their head, ordered the city gates to be flung open, for that thus he would go out to meet the foe.

Being with difficulty dissuaded from this mad project, he next declared that he would go to face them by himself, trusting to his beautiful voice and his passion and his tears to work upon their feelings.

Being informed that Vindex, one of the leaders of the rebellion, had criticised his singing, and said that he had a bad voice, he was more angry at this than all the revolt beside, and vowed that here at last was treason. But when the push came, and the armies were close to the city, his friends all deserted him, and Nero was left alone. Only a freedman of his named Phaon, and the boy Sporus, whom he loved, and two slaves, still remained faithful to him; and with these he set off to Phaon's country house, in a storm of thunder and lightning, riding with his face covered with a handkerchief. They passed the camps where the soldiers were cheering for the usurper, and when they at last arrived at Phaon's house, they had to creep through marshes and reeds to get in unobserved.

His clothes were all torn, and his shoes; his body also was torn with brambles; and in this way he was brought into a small chamber underground in Phaon's house. There he made them dig a grave, and Sporus to begin the funeral lament. And Nero looked at the grave, and said, "What an artist dies in me!"

Now, even while he was speaking, the hoofs of his pursuers steeds were heard clattering in the distance, every minute getting louder and louder. And Nero burst into verse of song from a scena in a tragedy:

"The gallop of swift-footed horses strikes on my ear."

And when he had finished singing, he set a dagger to his throat, and so died—the musician to the last—strange compound of art and villainy, such as the world has never seen again!

J. F. ROWBOTHAM.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER I.

JUST IN TIME.

"WHY is he standing there? What can he be going to do?"

The words broke involuntarily from Beatrice Ward's lips when she first caught sight of that solitary figure on the embankment. He stood quite motionless, with folded arms, and eyes looking dreamily across the tranquil meadows, as if he were taking in all the freshness and beauty of the sunrise. There was nothing extraordinary in this quiet survey of the landscape; but he had chosen a terrible spot for a halting-place. A man who simply desired to enjoy the charm of the scenery would hardly have stationed himself in the middle of the line when the down train would be coming along in a few minutes. And yet, although the face was still and pale, it gave no indication of the purpose that was in his mind. It was a young face, worn with many sorrows and stamped with habitual melancholy. But it wore to-day a quiet, musing look that did not betray the faintest sign of his determination to die.

It was too early for people to be walking in the lanes and fields; as yet no smoke had begun to curl upward from the chimneys of the nearest cottages, and Beatrice and the stranger seemed to be all alone in the pleasant summer dawn. Both were on the point of a leave-taking. She was saying a silent farewell to the familiar scenes of her childhood; he was bidding good-bye to a world that had not used him over kindly. Her eyes had been bent upon the grass at her feet, and she had looked up suddenly and seen him standing on the line. And then in an instant the truth had come to her with the swiftness of a lightning flash.

Beatrice Ward was a girl who often doubted herself, and was sometimes diffident when she should have been bold. But to-day she never thought of stifling her instincts.

Just at this spot the fence that parted the field from the embankment had been broken down; and it was the work of a few moments to rush through the long grass, climb the bank, and stand face to face with the man, with her hand upon his arm, and her eyes looking bravely into his.

"Come away," she said firmly. "Come away! The train will be here in a minute or two. I tell you that you *must* come!"

He glanced at her absently at first, with the air of one who had been disturbed in a day-dream. And then, slowly realising her desire



Nearer and nearer came the terrible thunder ; but she did not loosen her clasp or turn her glance aside.

to save, and seeing what manner of woman it was who sought to come between him and his fate, he met her gaze with a grave smile.

"You mean well," he said in a low musical voice. "Don't think me ungrateful if I tell you to go. As for me, I shall stay where I am."

"You will not stay." Some powerful spirit seemed to have taken possession of Beatrice, forcing her to utter determined words. "Do you know how near the train is? Come quickly!"

Her hands closed round his arm; he felt their grasp tighten convulsively, and a faint colour stole into his wan face. This girl who held him was a lady; those deep blue eyes, shining steadily upon him, were filled with the light of a true soul; but he was resolved that no power on earth should lure him back to life. He had made up his mind to die, and he would not be turned from his purpose by a woman's prayers. Yet he could not free himself roughly from those clinging hands. They were ungloved, for Beatrice had been gathering field-flowers; and as he looked down upon her slim white fingers, certain old memories began to stir in his heart, and all the old pain came back again.

"Don't, child; he said, sadly. "Can't you see that you are spending your little strength in vain? The train *is* near. Let me go!"

"I can hear it." She shuddered, but clung more closely to his arm. "Listen to me—I won't leave you here to die alone. See how young I am; yet I have had bitter sorrows, and I am going out into the world to face my fortune, whatever it may be. I don't care much about living; life isn't over sweet, but I shall try to bear it. Won't you bear with your life just a little longer? Won't you give yourself just one chance more?"

"No," he said, stubbornly. "I've exhausted all my powers of endurance. Let me go, child; you are running a risk in stopping here. Slip down the bank as fast as you can, and forget all about me."

The girl still held him; her face, white and resolute, looked up into his, and he read in it a determination that was equal to his own. Nearer and nearer came the terrible thunder; but she did not loosen her clasp nor turn her glance aside. One hasty look up the line, and he caught a glimpse of white steam between some distant trees; and then with his left hand he strove to tear the clinging hands away.

But he had never realised the strength that comes to a woman in a moment of desperation. Moreover, Beatrice, slight as she seemed, was a country girl, young and full of vigour; and she set her will bravely against his, and clutched him with all her might. The struggle went on in silence; she had no breath to waste in words; and meanwhile that awful roar was shaking the very ground on which they stood. He made one last effort to throw her off—failed—glanced up again, and saw that the death which he had sought for himself was close upon them both.

Long afterwards, when he tried to recall those terrible seconds, he

could never clearly understand the way in which their deliverance had come to pass. He had a vague remembrance of taking a wild leap with the girl in his arms; and then the roar deafened him, and a thick cloud blotted out everything from his sight. When the noise ceased, and the mists cleared away from his brain, he found himself lying on the side of the embankment. And down below, at the bottom of the bank, lay the prostrate figure of the woman who had saved his life.

Yes, she had saved him! He had come there to die, and yet, here he stood, alive and strong, with the sweet breath of morning blowing softly on his face, and the quiet fields around him. A bird on a hawthorn-bush broke out suddenly into an ecstasy of jubilant shakes and trills; a burst of sunlight bathed the buttercup meadows in wonderful glory; and God's earth rejoiced in the splendour of the bright young day. It was May-time, fresh and balmy as the May-time of his boyhood, when he had carried light burdens of blossom-laden boughs, and sung old songs for very joy of heart.

Then he sprang down the steep bank and hastened to the unconscious girl lying among the long grass. Her poor little white face looked very childish as the sunlight shone upon it; her hat had fallen off, revealing a small head covered with sunny, rippling hair, which had escaped from its pins and broken into soft curls. Very gently he swept back the golden-brown tresses that were hanging over her forehead, and, lifting her lightly, rested her head upon his knee.

There was no one at hand to bring water. The nearest habitation was a cottage in the far corner of the field; and he was wondering anxiously what he should do. At last, slowly and wearily, the eyelids unclosed, and the deep-coloured eyes met his with a bewildered look which filled him with intense pain. She was only a girl, quiet and sensitive by nature, needing all her strength to do her little share of work in the world. What if that desperate struggle for his life had broken the very mainspring of her existence?

"We are both quite safe now," he said, softly.

She took in the full meaning of his words, and the light that came quickly into her face at once dispelled his fears. For a second or two she lay quite still, and he felt that she was drinking in all the sweetness of a great deliverance. There was not a sound to break the stillness of the place, except the birds' songs, and the faint rustle of the long grass. Yet Godwin Earle was distinctly conscious that this was the most sacred moment he had ever known in his life.

"I shall be strong again in a few minutes," she said, speaking in a very quiet voice, and lifting her head from its resting-place. "Everything is a little confused. I think I must have had a fall."

He helped her to rise, and then picked up her hat from the grass, watching her silently while she tried, with unsteady fingers, to smooth her hair and set her dress in order. Just for an instant the be-

wildered look came back, and she cast a wistful glance around, as if there were something that she had suddenly missed.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "Have you lost anything?"

"My bag. I was carrying it when—when I first caught sight of you on the embankment. I wish I could find the exact spot where I was when I saw you."

"You can't be far from it," he answered. "Only this long grass hides everything; but I was always good at finding things. We'll have that bag in a few minutes, never fear."

It was now her turn to watch him, and as her eyes followed his movements, she silently asked herself whether this could be the same man who had so lately courted death?

In spite of dark days and divers misfortunes, there was nothing in Godwin Earle's appearance that betokened a lack of prosperity. He was of middle height, slender, graceful, well-dressed; with little to distinguish him from dozens of other thoroughbred men who may be seen going in and out of the West End clubs. His skin was sun-tanned, but the hair and moustache were fair; and the eyes, of darkest grey, could flash swift lights from under their heavy lids. His settled air of quiet melancholy told you nothing at first sight, and might easily have been mistaken for simple weariness. And yet, if you had looked closely into the face, you could hardly have doubted that the lines so deeply graven there were traces of bitter pain. It was something more than mere ennui which had driven this man to the verge of suicide, and sent him forth, a wanderer in deserted fields, to seek his death alone "between the dawn and the daytime."

"Here is the bag," he said, approaching her, after a brief search, with a leather satchel in his hand. "And now I hope you are going to get some rest and refreshment. Is your home near?"

"I have lost my home." Her voice was steady and quiet, but there was a ring of sadness in the tone that might have touched a far harder heart than his. "Ever since I was two years old I have lived with my grandfather in the village yonder. He died a fortnight ago, and now I am going to London."

"But you must know people in London? Surely you are not quite without friends?"

"I have only one friend; my old governess. She is married, and I am to go and live with her. It was my grandfather's wish."

"Where does she live?" asked Godwin Earle, eagerly.

"In Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square."

He felt a thrill of relief. This sole friend of hers was living in a good neighbourhood. It would have pained him to hear that she was to spend her days in some unfitting home. This girl, so gentle and refined in all her looks and ways, was not meant to pass her life among vulgar scenes and common people. It would have been hard to picture her amid uncongenial surroundings.

Beatrice Ward was not regularly beautiful. Her features were

anything but faultless, although the blue eyes, deep-coloured and deep-set, had a singular charm of their own. But few critics could have quarrelled seriously with the oval face, and the pure cream-tints of the smooth skin ; and the slender, yet rounded figure, was moulded like a sculptor's dream. Add to all this, an unmistakable air of good-breeding, and you will scarcely wonder that Godwin Earle, a man of fastidious taste, had begun to find his new acquaintance wonderfully attractive.

Moreover, he was already beginning to be glad that she had drawn him out of the Valley of the Shadow, and led him back into the light of day. For months he had been living in solitude, embittered by a thousand cares, and half maddened by a sense of cruel wrong. He had parted himself from everyone he knew, and had led a hermit life, consumed by endless longings after all that he had known and loved best. And at last, he had found the burden of existence too heavy to be borne, and had made up his mind to fling it aside for ever.

This girl, who had stepped in so bravely between him and death, had done something more. She had made life interesting to him again.

He was not easily misled where women were concerned, and he recognised a sweet and pure nature in Beatrice Ward. She was brave ; but hers was by no means the dauntlessness of a strong-minded woman. It was the courage of a warm heart, passionately determined to save a soul from its own wild impulses. And the effort had cost her a great deal of suffering.

Although her complexion did not show many varying tints, the young face looked wan ; and there was a deep shade under the eyes, giving their intense blue an almost unnatural lustre. But earnestly, with her very might, she strove to quiet her quivering nerves, and collect her scattered thoughts.

"I must walk on to the railway station now," she said, after a little pause. "My luggage is waiting for me there. I am going by the seven o'clock train, and I wanted to take a last walk through these dear old fields. Will you promise me one thing before I say good-bye ?" She raised her face beseechingly ; and her sweet voice trembled, as it always did when she was deeply moved.

"What is it ?" he asked, eagerly.

"That—that you will never try to fling away your life again. Promise that you will wait till God takes it. Promise to have patience, and bear your troubles to the end."

"I do promise," he answered, gravely and solemnly. "I have not thanked you yet for having saved me ; but you don't want thanks. Trust me, I shall never forget the lesson I have learnt this morning. It will not be easy to face my life, but I am determined, now, to live it as a man ought to do. I, too, am going up to town, and I hope you will let me take care of you."

She drew a long breath of relief. Young and inexperienced as she was, an unerring instinct told her that this man might be safely relied

upon ; and she was conscious, at that moment, of a great need of protection and kindness. His promise, so gravely spoken, took away the last fear from her heart, and she felt that her weary head and strained nerves might rest. As yet she did not even know his name, nor had she told him hers, but as they walked silently, side by side, through the sweet field paths, there was a perfect understanding between them ; a mutual trust that could not have been expressed by any formal words. He saw that she was too much shaken and spent to talk, and privately resolved to watch over her till he had seen her to the very threshold of her new home. After that, what then ? Might not this strange acquaintance be the beginning of a life-long friendship ?

The railway station at Silverdean was as uncomfortable a place for waiting travellers as could be found on any line in England ; and Godwin instantly resolved to spend as little time there as possible. They had half an hour to spare ; and after looking about for a few minutes, he discovered a pretty cottage, close to the booking-office, and prevailed upon its inmates to give Beatrice a cup of hot tea. Her old home was two miles from Silverdean, and the people did not know her ; but they were civil enough to let her wash her face, and arrange her rebellious hair before a glass. She was feeling stronger and fresher when she joined Godwin again, and returned to the platform to wait for the train.

He read the name written on her luggage labels, and turned to her with a smile.

"Miss Ward," he said, "let me introduce myself as Godwin Earle. My lodgings are in Bulstrode Street ; so that we are destined to be near neighbours, you see."

"Is Bulstrode Street near Cavendish Square ?" she asked, with a true rustic ignorance of town localities.

"Very near. But is it possible that you have never seen your new home ? Don't you know anything of London ?"

"Oh, yes ; I have been several times to town with my grandfather. But we never went far beyond Regent Street and the shops. Our last trip was two years ago," she added, sadly. "That was just after Mrs. Milton married. Then his health failed, and he never left Silverdean again."

"Is Mrs. Milton your old governess ?"

"Yes, but she really is not very old, although it is just ten years since she came to us in answer to my grandfather's advertisement. She was distantly related to our Rector, and liked the idea of living in Silverdean. I was eight years old when she began to teach me — a very troublesome child, I am afraid. The Rector's daughters were her pupils too."

"You must have many friends and old companions in Silverdean. The Rector and his daughters will miss you very much."

"No one will miss me now-a-days. Goodbyes are always painful things, and yet I am scarcely sorry to be going away. The Rector's daughters were older than myself; they all married, and found new homes. One of them, who was my favourite, went to Africa to be a missionary's wife. Two years ago Miss Stuart became Mrs. Milton, Last year, the Rector died, and strangers are living in the old Rectory now. So you see that all the familiar faces had vanished from my circle before I lost my grandfather."

Her voice, always soft and quiet, had begun to tremble again when she spoke of that recent loss. Godwin Earle thought how lovely and childlike she looked, standing beside him in the morning sunshine. Through the thick cloud of his gloom and despair, this girl, Beatrice, had come flashing like a sunbeam. And perhaps because he had seen her first in the early morn, with May flowers all around her, he associated her ever afterwards with things that were fresh, and fragrant, and lovable.

There was another pause. Then a porter rang a great bell, dutifully observing the usual forms, although there were only two travellers on the platform; and the London train rushed into the dreary little station.

If a thought-reader had been near Beatrice and Godwin at that moment, he would have found that they had but one feeling between them. The girl had dreamed of a solitary journey, and dreaded it from her very heart, and this new friend had given a fresh charm to her empty life. The man, worn out with repeated misfortunes, was ready to accept her as his good angel in human shape; and both were secretly rejoicing that there was to be no parting at this cheerless railway-station—that they were to be fellow-travellers, beginning the journey of life anew on this eventful day.

There was only a brief stoppage at Silverdean; Beatrice's boxes were bundled ignominiously into the luggage-van, and she and Godwin were hustled sharply into the vacant compartment of a second-class carriage. The door was slammed, the train moved on, and these two, who had met so strangely, were alone together.

How long had they known each other? Had hours, or months, or years passed away since Beatrice caught her first glimpse of that solitary figure on the embankment? And had minutes or days elapsed since Godwin first felt the light touch of the hand on his arm, and saw her blue eyes gazing steadily into his? He looked at her as she sat in the opposite corner, her face fresh from its recent bath; her bright hair pinned up neatly under her close black hat, yet breaking out into a tiny curl here and there; her little hands clasped together on her lap. As a rule it is only in novels that new acquaintances suddenly take it into their heads to tell the history of their lives to each other; but Godwin felt that she had a right to his confidence, and was conscious of a growing desire to let her know his troubles.

The train rushed on, and Beatrice had actually forgotten to take a

last look at the quiet hills that kept guard over Silverdean, and the church tower, which was just visible through a break in the trees. Already that peaceful country life had become a thing of the past, and her heart was opening eagerly to receive new interests, although it still ached with the sense of loss.

"I shall try to get some work to do in London," she said, speaking with childlike frankness. "I hope it will be easy to find employment, for I am poor, and I want to earn some money."

"So do I," replied Godwin, with a smile that was followed by a sigh.

CHAPTER II.

OLD CORDER.

BEFORE they had got to the end of their journey, Beatrice was made acquainted with some of Godwin's troubles, and felt convinced that she should hear more of them later on. And he, on his side, had been frankly told how her grandfather had lost money in an unfortunate investment, and how his last years had been embittered by anxious thoughts about the girl's future.

She was a soldier's child, born in India, and her mother had died while she was still a baby. When Beatrice was fifteen, Captain Ward had come home to see his daughter, and had gone eastward again with many a promise of speedy reunion. But the promises were never fulfilled; the father was stricken down after a brief illness, and the young girl's only guardian was the old grandsire who felt that his own days were numbered. It was a melancholy story, and the telling of it saddened her, and drew tears from her honest blue eyes. Godwin had the greatest difficulty in the world to refrain from seizing those little hands in his, and comforting her in a somewhat demonstrative fashion. But he did not do anything of the kind; not once did he over-step the bounds of deference; and his words of consolation were very quietly and gravely spoken.

The May sunlight was shining brightly over London, and as the cab, heavily laden with her boxes, rattled along Regent Street, Beatrice's spirits began to revive. She looked around her with the fresh delight of a child, glad to find herself in such a gay world; and then, remembering the time when she had walked this very street by her grandfather's side, a mist swam before her eyes. She was not sorry to lose sight of the shops, and turn into Cavendish Square; the strength which had sustained her so well that morning was beginning to give way at last, and it was a weary face which was raised to Godwin when they drew near Mrs. Milton's door.

"Good-bye, Mr. Earle," she said. "I have to thank you very much for looking after my luggage and me."

"Don't let us talk about thanks," he answered, earnestly. "Be-

tween us, they are absurd formalities. How can I ever forget that I owe my life to you?"

She tried to speak, but words did not come readily to her lips, and he helped her out of the cab in silence. In a few seconds the door was thrown open, and Godwin caught sight of flowers in the hall; a smart page; a maid in the freshest of caps and aprons, and a quiet-looking lady in a black gown. There was a silent hand-pressure, a last look from tearful eyes, and then he found himself walking absently along Wimpole Street, and wondering whether he were really awake or in the middle of a strange dream?

His landlady belonged to the numerous class who prefer gentlemen-lodgers, "because they give so little trouble." It was a well-kept house, filled with men from top to bottom, and their comings and goings could hardly be noticed very closely in the unceasing business of household affairs. Godwin's feet carried him mechanically to the familiar door, and, letting himself in with his latch-key, he went deliberately up three flights of stairs, entered a little back bed-room, and looked around him with the vague wonder of a man who has suddenly recovered his senses after a long interval of unconsciousness.

Everything remained just as he had left it yesterday evening; the ashes of the papers he had burnt were still in the grate; his sketch-book and some chalks and pencils were lying on a little table by the bed-side. All the familiar objects seemed mutely to welcome his return; he was here, among his few possessions, once more; and yet last night he had taken a silent farewell of this very room and its contents. Instinctively he turned to the glass, and was surprised to see his own image looking much the same as usual—more worn and haggard, certainly; but not conspicuously changed.

Then, as one remembers the shadowy incidents in a dream, he recalled his aimless wanderings through the London streets, his solitary supper at a café, where he had eaten and drunk with the grim intent to strengthen himself for his purpose; his midnight journey along the South-Western line to Silverdean; more wanderings across empty fields; and that last terrible hour between the sunrise and the day. But he had not come back to dwell on memories which were enough to unsettle the strongest brain; he had returned to keep his promise to Beatrice Ward, and make a good use of the life that she had saved.

He did not feel much like a hero, it must be confessed, as he washed, and shaved, and dressed, and prepared to go back into the everyday world anew. It is not heroic to go out with the firm intention of committing suicide, and return alive and well. On the whole, Godwin was conscious that he cut a very sorry figure in his own eyes; and he tried to think as little as possible about himself as he ran down stairs and went quickly out into the sunshine.

But the bath, and the long-deferred breakfast, had helped him to look with hopeful eyes upon a future which had seemed intolerable last night. He walked with a firm step through Vere Street, and

into Oxford Street, turning his face City-wards, although he had no definite purpose in view. The streets were crowded. It was London's best time of year, and pretty faces were to be seen on every side. Shop-windows were in all their fresh glory of Summer fashions, and shop-people were up to their eyes in business. In such a bustling, cheery, active world as this, there must surely be some work somewhere for his hands to do. Commonplace old sayings, fraught with hope and comfort, came drifting into his head as he strode along in the sunlight. "It is always darkest before the dawn," said an inward voice; and his heart throbbed with the sudden conviction that his dawn was really coming at last.

He had got as far as Regent Circus when an idea darted, like a lightning-flash into his mind. It was so bright a thought, and it shaped itself with such astonishing swiftness into a substantial hope, that it actually brought him to a standstill. "Old Corder," he murmured to himself. "Old Corder! How was it that I didn't think of him before?" And then he quickened his steps, and jumped into a City omnibus.

As the omnibus rattled on, he began slowly to understand how it was that he had not thought sooner of old Corder. For a long time he had steadily refused to cut those slender threads of hope which held him to his past life. He had believed (or had tried to believe) that the hearts which had hardened against him would soften, and that the doors of his relations, closed stubbornly now, would open to him hospitably once more. And yet his intimate knowledge of the family character ought to have told him that it was best at once to accept his position as a banished man.

While those slender threads of hope remained, he would never, of course, have thought of applying to old Corder. Was not old Corder the only connection of whom the Earle family imagined that they had cause to be ashamed? To mention the name of Corder was to call blushes into the waxen cheeks of the two Misses Earle, and to raise a storm in the breast of their widowed sister, the Countess Gradi-zoff. Not one of them could even forget that Grace, the youngest and fairest of them all, had cast her pride and dignity to the winds, and, in the face of the bitterest opposition, had given her hand and heart to the son of old Corder the provision merchant.

It is true that Grace and her husband had both been in their graves for many a year, and had left no child behind them, but there are certain offenders for whom Death himself can scarcely win a pardon. The name of Corder on Grace's headstone froze up the fount of her sisters' tears, and kept their indignation always fresh. Moreover, poor Grace, with an invalid's sick yearning for her birth-place, had come back to die in Fairbridge, the stately old country town where the Earles had been "leading people" for two centuries at least. Her sisters had not been asked to receive her into the family house where she was born, for young Corder, too, was proud

after his fashion, and had taken a furnished villa for his wife to die in. They had called on her and wept over her sometimes, with a fraternal condescension which afforded her but small comfort ; but young Godwin, just home from school, and untroubled by much consciousness of dignity, had showed a good deal of real feeling for his pretty Aunt Grace. Once or twice, when he was leaving the sick room, he remembered that he had come in contact with an elderly man, who had looked at him with penetrating eyes, but they had passed each other with only a few words of greeting. That elderly man was old Corder.

The Countess Gradizoff, then living in Russia with her husband, had written furious letters about the Corders ; and the sisters, who had always succumbed to her imperious temper, were made doubly stern and miserable after reading one of these epistles. But Godwin liked Caroline Gradizoff less than any of his aunts, and those angry commands of hers invariably roused in him a spirit of disobedience.

With his head full of old recollections, Godwin Earle got out of the omnibus, and turned quickly into Aldersgate Street ; and then, all at once, the clouds of doubt began to hide the brightness of his new hope, and he asked himself whether he had not started off on a fool's errand.

Of all names under heaven, old Corder must certainly hold the name of Earle in deepest detestation. His son had never recovered the death of that fair wife who had stooped so low as to marry him. Frank Corder, ardent and intense, had lost all interest in life in losing Grace, and had only survived her one year. And old Corder, alone and childless in his last days, could scarcely be censured, if he laid the blame of all his bitterest sorrows upon that unfortunate marriage.

"How can I expect him to receive me civilly?" thought Godwin, walking with slow steps and downcast eyes. "Should I feel inclined to be civil if I were in his place? It seems to me that I may as well turn back at once, and spare myself unnecessary mortification.

But, chancing to raise his eyes at that moment, he saw the name of Corder staring him full in the face, and found himself close to an old-fashioned office window.

Apparently it was the whim of Mr. Corder to despise alterations, and to stick as closely as possible to the premises which his father had left him. The arrangement of goods, which might be seen above the ground glass of the lower half of the window, was simple in the extreme. Sauces, pickles, and tinned meats displayed themselves in orderly rows ; but there was no attempt at ornament, no departure from long established rules. The warehouse was small, considering the amount of business that was done in it ; the ceiling was low, and all the fittings were of the plainest description. Even the clerks had a staid and sober look, and seemed to have little in common with their jaunty fraternity of the present day. If Corder's establishment had been one of those gorgeous palaces of trade which it is the

fashion to erect nowadays, it is doubtful whether Godwin Earle would have found courage to cross its threshold. But this unpretentious, antiquated place gave him a good impression of the man who owned it; and, feeling more awkward than he had ever felt in his whole life, he went in.

"Can I see Mr. Corder?" he asked, addressing himself to an elderly young man who was making up a sample of tea.

"I will inquire, sir," was the answer, delivered with studied politeness.

There was a little waiting, and then, from the obscure end of the long warehouse, came a tall, thin man, white-haired, and with spectacles on his respectable Roman nose. In Godwin's memory Mr. Corder was by no means so imposing an individual as the person who now advanced to meet him; and he was considerably surprised at the change that time had wrought.

"Do you wish to see Mr. Corder, himself?" inquired the white-haired man in measured tones.

"I do," said Godwin, promptly, tendering him a card. "I wish to see him on important business."

The old clerk bowed, took the card, and disappeared once more into obscurity, while Godwin waited among the sauces and pickles with a heavy heart.

But he had not long to wait. The old clerk came back quickly, and said: "Follow me, if you please." And Godwin did follow him, into a little den full of ledgers and papers, and up a narrow staircase to another den, larger than the room below, and furnished with two arm-chairs.

From one of these chairs a small, spare man rose slowly, and greeted the visitor with a grave bend of the head. He wore no spectacles; and no sooner did Godwin meet those steady, penetrating eyes than he knew that he had never quite forgotten old Corder.

"I ought to apologise for calling on you, Mr. Corder," he began, frankly. "I have no excuse to offer, except that I am in need and trouble."

The old merchant bent his head again, and his keen eyes seemed to be searching the young man through and through. As yet poverty had not reduced Godwin Earle to cheap coats and trousers, and he kept all the unconscious grace and stateliness of bearing inherited from a long line of military ancestors. And in spite of his worn face and melancholy eyes, it could not be said that he looked like a man who had been fighting a hard battle with an evil fortune. Were thoughts like these passing through old Corder's mind, as he sat quietly scanning his visitor, and waiting for him to speak again? Godwin did not know. The old man's face was utterly inscrutable, and he felt that his task was becoming almost too hard for him.

"I have come," he said, abruptly, "to ask if you can find some work for me to do. I have no help, and no friends, and in a little while I shall be starving."

For the first time since Godwin had entered the room, the merchant's glance wavered. He looked away quickly to the dusty window-panes which admitted a few yellow City sunbeams ; and even in that anxious moment Godwin noticed the deep furrows on his forehead and cheeks. If the young man had found eighteen months of misfortune too heavy for him to bear, how could this old man have endured years of sorrow and loneliness ? An empty home, a bereaved heart, a life from which everything that was interesting had been taken—surely it must have required no common courage to face the wide-reaching desert of such an existence, and fix the tired eyes on the horizon line that seemed so faint and far away.

"I must first know what you can work at, Mr. Earle," answered old Corder, after a slight pause.

"There lies my difficulty." The young man spoke openly, encouraged by his tone. "I have never been trained for office work ; but I am heartily willing to learn book-keeping."

"You have been abroad as a secretary, I believe ?" said the merchant, after another brief silence.

"Yes ; my mother's only brother, Sir Albert Lane, was appointed governor of one of the Indian provinces, and I went out with him. I dare say you have heard that my uncle failed in his diplomacy and was recalled. His staff and dependents fell from him ; he returned to England in shattered health, and died soon after his arrival. He was the last survivor of my mother's people, and in him I lost my sole friend."

"You surprise me." Mr. Corder had listened attentively. "I thought you would always find a home with your aunts at Fairbridge. You lived with them as a boy, I remember."

"My father left me to their care when he died," said Godwin, quietly. "But they have all turned against me."

"And your uncle—Canon Earle ?"

"He always agrees with my aunts, and he has turned against me, too. For a year I have been fighting with my fate, and hoping in spite of constant discouragement, and now I have made up my mind to accept my position. I shall not try any more to set myself right in my aunts' eyes. They must think as badly of me as they please ; I will never trouble them again."

Once more the old merchant bent a scrutinising gaze upon the speaker, but Godwin could meet it without shrinking.

"I am quite friendless ; my little stock of money is nearly exhausted. My father, Colonel Earle, was a poor man, and had no fortune to leave behind him ; besides, it was always expected that Sir Albert Lane would look after my future. It is hardly fair that you should be bothered with all these uninteresting details," added the young man, apologetically. "And yet I can't help saying that you are the last hope I have."

Again there was a silence. For some seconds old Corder seemed

to be absorbed in his own reflections, and then there came a sudden lighting up of his furrowed face.

"You are not so very much changed, after all," he said, abruptly. "Your eyes are the same as ever; and they are poor Grace's eyes. You haven't quite forgotten your Aunt Grace, I suppose?"

"No; if she had lived I should never have wanted a friend."

"Well, well, there's no need for despair." The old man's look and tone were full of encouragement. "But we must talk matters over quietly, and then we shall see what you are fit for. What do you say to dining with me this evening?"

Godwin accepted the invitation with genuine pleasure.

"I am living in lodgings now," Mr. Corder went on. "After my son's death I gave up my house in Kensington, and took to bachelor habits. You will find me in Clarges Street."

And then, after a few more words, Godwin Earle found himself in the old-fashioned warehouse again, and passed out into the street, hardly able to realise his own good fortune. Old Corder meant to take him by the hand; there was no doubt of that; and he was well enough acquainted with the state of the Corder finances to know that this help would be of the most effectual kind. There had never been much money in the Earle family; and the aunts at Fairbridge, although they were deeply disgusted at Grace's marriage, had sometimes bestowed a half-envious thought on her easy circumstances. It was no wonder, if, after the rumours heard in his boyhood, young Earle was ready to believe the merchant's resources to be almost inexhaustible.

Godwin Earle had lived much in the world without becoming altogether a worldly man. There were depths in his nature which his relations had never touched; feelings which they had never understood. Under that graceful society manner of his, he had always carried a warm heart. He could not accept Mr. Corder's kindness without giving him something stronger than gratitude in return; and already he had vowed to himself that he would try to brighten the old man's lonely life, and fill the place of the son he had lost.

Full of hope and courage, he walked back slowly westward. But who can say what mysterious impulse prompted him to saunter along Wimpole Street, and pass the Miltons' house again?

It was certainly an attractive-looking house, bright and fresh of aspect, and the open windows afforded glimpses of pretty lace curtains. As he looked, a Victoria drew up before the door. Two ladies descended; and he caught another view of the flower-decked hall, and the smart page; and wished that he, too, had the right of entrance. Only a few hours ago he had left Beatrice Ward at that very threshold; but it seemed as if a month at least had gone by since their parting!

And then his thoughts drifted back to another woman's face—a face that had been the guiding star of his early manhood.

Far away in India, amid strange scenes, and divers temptations, he had preserved the memory of his early love ; and clung to her still—

"Through change that teaches to forget."

But now the hope was dead ; the dream was over ; and the ashes of her last letter were scattered about the grate in his room. Many a young love has a like ending. And many a lover lives long enough to be thankful to the kind fate that took his fancied bliss away.

(To be continued.)

A REQUIEM.

PEACE !—the eyelids gently cover,
Lay the arms across the breast,
For the world's wild din is over,
And the evening bringeth Rest.

Life has fled—and no to-morrow
Dawns upon that placid brow,
All its sin and all its sorrow—
Only God can know it now.

Hark ! the funeral bell is ringing,
Lay her down beneath the sod—
But the angel-bands are singing
In the Paradise of God.

All is past ; alone, forsaken,
What is mortal may decay,
But the spirit shall awaken
To a new and glorious day.

Peace !—the eyelids gently cover,
Lay the arms across the breast,
For the world's wild din is over,
And the evening bringeth Rest.

H. B. F.

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M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"KYLE," SHE SAID, SMILING, "I HAVE HAD SUCH A LOVELY DREAM!"